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Embodying inspiration race and disaffected young white men in Burnley

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Chapter 5

Butterworth ABC

'Why are some groups of white youths so lacking in self-esteem and confidence'?

Cantle (2001, Section 5.10.7)

'CONFIDENCE: have you got it? Why not!'

Sign hanging from the ceiling of gym in Butterworth ABC

1. Butterworth ABC

1.1 30th January, 2006

I had been putting off going to the boxing club for the first two weeks of my stay in Burnley. On my first visit there, some six months previously, I provoked suspicion from Donald, the manager and owner of the club. I had gone in, introduced myself and asked about training at the gym.

"so long as you're not one of these fly by nights?... we get them coming in here sometimes... they just want to look at themselves in the mirror and throw cotton wool at each other... it's just a good, honest working class gym."

This was my first encounter with the closely guarded, exclusive dynamic of boxing culture. Was I not conspicuously working class? I tried displacing the blame for my apparent lack of authenticity; perhaps it was the friend accompanying me, in his lime green Bermuda shorts and sandals? I wondered whether Donald had used this seemingly rehearsed script before and what function it served in the gym. We chatted for a while about my returning to train another time. As we finished and I went to leave, I shook hands with Donald and introduced myself as Rob.



“That’s not what I’ll be calling ye!”

I returned some months later on 30th January. Seen from the outside, the gym has features familiar from the lamentations of Cattle and Clarke for Burnley’s dysfunctional transition to a post-industrial landscape marked by deprivation and physical decay. It is housed in a disused mill called Burnside, one of many mills alive with hard working, white male bodies during the long period over which Burnley’s economy was dominated by the textile industry. Burnside is hedged in by disused canals and surrounded by more mills, some larger and some smaller, and now either empty or housing manufacturing and construction industries. There are continuities between the practices that sustained the textiles industries and the practices illustrated in this chapter; repetitive and physically exhausting, each bound up in authorised scripts of white masculinity. Butterworth is on the second floor. It is hard to recognise from the outside, as its windows sit high above the canal and are covered in a dense network of iron gratings. They are thick with dirt. On this night, as on many to come, I passed a boarded up night club and moved through an open iron gate at the side of the building. I made my way down a short alleyway, at the bottom of which was a flight of broad, flat concrete stairs. On the second floor a cardboard sign with thick black marker on it:

Butterworth ABC: out of character area

I made my way through a cold, large room. It was dimly lit and empty but for a pile of damp and torn cardboard boxes, a heap of carpet and some plastering equipment seemingly set down mid-use. At the opposite end of the room a large white pair of doors stretched between bare concrete floor and high, brick ceiling. Noise came from behind them. A shaking rumble. Completely indiscernible on that day, though tangible in the tugging of my innards as I contemplated walking through the door, seeing Donald, meeting the rest of them; the culmination of

the trampling of booted feet, the thud-thud-thud of gloves being driven into heavy bags, the low chattering of voices. The odd voice raised above the others, male, aggressive and authoritative. A siren suddenly sounded inside; a wail, its pitch alternating high and low before the final note nose-dived and flattened to a harsh discordance. All fell silent. A moment later the low voices started again. Feeling a little like I was stepping over a cliff, gathering my nerve and setting my face, I pushed hard against the door. It did not move. I threw my weight and it banged heavily. Still, it did not budge. A third time. Then, after a pause, I tried pulling it and it opened smoothly; the puzzled, amused faces that greeted me let me know that I had probably given out my first clear signal that I was a newcomer.

Having briefly introduced myself to Donald for a second time (he clearly did not remember the first), I set my bags down by the heavy white doors and waited. Uncomfortably. Bodies and things were busy all around me, passing me by. Stationary, I searched for a discernible pattern. All I could see was movement. Feeling awkward, I sidled over to a bare side of the gym, beside a pillar, and went through some ineffectual stretches, doing-look-busy as others milled about. The swirling movement began to settle down into familiar refrains that gave my mind and my nerves something to find purchase on; here and there Asian skin; thick male arms and short male hair; sportswear; heavy bags arranged around a central ring. Whilst stretching -so as to have a movement with a reportable purpose- no patterns or rules emerged to provide me with the initial guidance needed to get involved. [Why are they standing, waiting over there? Is that the right thing to do? They all seem to know each other]. The siren went once more and the young men beside the rows of heavy bags started their fistic cacophony again. To my relief (as I was running out of stretches) an older man (who I came to know as Gerry) strode confidently through the gym. He was corralling people for the evening's circuit training.

The workout we were put through had a format I was to become familiar with over the next six months. Alongside twenty or so other young men, I spent forty five minutes chasing around the hall and stopping at different points, 'stations', to do exercises; press ups, diamond press ups, squat thrusts, burpees, star jumps, V sit ups, rolling sit ups, star sit ups. Two laps of the gym, then ten repetitions at a station. Two laps, next station. Two laps next station. After every station had been completed, we started again, this time doing fifteen repetitions at each. My thighs burned as squat thrusts accumulated, intensity spreading from the knee along the top of the quadriceps and into the hip. The diamond press ups tore a torque of tension into the back of my elbows. In the moments when discomfort was not so intense I glanced around; the three or four young Asian men involved in the circuits were distributed through the twenty or more young white men. Then we went up to twenty, then back down to fifteen and then to ten. I looked up again; some of the men were falling behind, their movements lacking conviction. Others were conspicuously full of energy and hungry for more work, bouncing on their heels and getting the exercises done sharply and quickly. A white noise intoxicated my thoughts [Can't not finish circuits on your first night... look busy... don't let the trainer see you resting], sensations [bursting lungs, stiffening legs, nausea in my guts] and emotions [relief at getting going with the field research, but awkward and isolated].

After the circuits were completed, the different training apparatus around the gym came to life; heavy punch bags; shaped punch bags (one for practising uppercuts, another for body shots); mirrors for shadow boxing; skipping rope areas; speed ball stations; a small weight lifting section. The piercing siren sounded out three minute rounds, with a one minute break in between, allowing us to pace the effort with which we skipped, punched and boxed. I decided to begin with skipping. There were fewer people crowding around the spots set aside for this exercise and I did not want to embarrass myself by messing up too publicly, rudely getting in people's way or by crudely inserting myself in their regular routines. However, I had wrongly assumed that I could skip. I managed

three jumps before catching the rope on my heel [looking around to make sure nobody had noticed]. I began employing a one foot after the other technique, watching myself in the mirror [...ungainly, effeminate?... stop!]. I decided to cut my losses and move onto shadow boxing, which, in any case, seemed like a much more manly thing to be getting on with. I tried to give myself an alibi by recalling Joe Calzaghe noting that he never skipped, as it was 'for girls'; but, faced with the immediacy of lean, strong men aggressively completing complicated skipping routines, I could not manage to convince myself of Calzaghe's authorising script. So I watched the fighters beside me, trying to get a better idea of what I should be doing, or at least what I should look like I am doing, whilst also trying to avoid conspicuously staring at them [keep busy... look the part...don't make a fool of yourself...].

As the evening progressed, I eventually made my way around to the heavy bags. By now my arms seemed to weigh twice as much as usual and my legs were weak and unsteady. One of the trainers approached me and introduced himself as Geoff. Geoff invited me into the smaller sparring ring, set to one side beside the lockers and opposite the changing area. I found myself proudly accepting, even though I was having trouble punching my way through a busy thirty seconds, never mind a three minute round. Sensing that if I impressed now, I might gain a little recognition of sorts, I stepped over the top rope; feeling a bit like an oversized clown in the smaller ring usually used for juniors.

Geoff: "Have you ever boxed before?"

Rob: "No, I haven't."

Geoff: "How old are ye?"

Rob: "Twenty three."

[Geoff's face crinkles and his eyes narrow... disappointment? resignation? Impatience?... I get the feeling he thinks I'm too old to get started. I'll show him.]

Geoff spent the next two rounds walking around the ring, hands high, palms turned towards me, barking instructions.

“One, one-two, one, one-two, one, one-two-three”

[rush of blood, slap of glove on pad]

“Relax... you’re pushing... let it go”

[relax... how? Loosen my shoulders and legs?... strike cleanly...]

“Keep your feet on the floor, you’re off balance”

[put it all together, hold shape]

“Keep your hand up and bring it back after the jab, or you’ll get caught with the right”

[rein it in, form over power]

“You could punch all night and not knock me out”

[rush... pride, strike harder, break his hands, snap his wrists...]

“One, one-two, one, one-two, one, one-two-three”

1.2 Charismatic authority

Over the coming months I gradually came to know the characters that I met on that night. It is immediately striking that Butterworth ABC gravitates around its management team, which is comprised of three white men, middle aged or older, who have lived locally for many years. Donald is the manager, owner and figurehead. An intense man, with slicked back grey hair and oversized glasses, he holds your gaze intently whilst he talks to you, slowly, deliberately, clearly accustomed to being heeded. There is a remarkably authoritative gesture of his, which powerfully characterises him and still affects me through memory; a patient and silent pause that makes one feel it is your own gap to fill. Gerry is the fitness coach. A younger man than Donald, he leads circuits every evening and otherwise typically works with the junior or less experienced fighters. A third coach, Geoff, is older than Gerry but younger than Donald. He more often works with the senior fighters at the club, sometimes late into the evening and in preparation for specific fights. These three men each have a distinctive manner

of engaging with people, of energising the club and of teaching young men to box.

Donald is quiet and withdrawn, but a forceful presence nonetheless. He spends the evenings at Butterworth standing at the 'office', which is a desk at the front of the gym. It leans against the wall between the doors and the lockers, papers sprawled across it, the money box perched on top of them and a small television set to one side. At the end of an evening's training, Donald chats with the parents who come in to pick up their young fighters, and playfully shadow boxes with the small children they bring along. He talks animatedly with the fathers about boxing and discusses the progress of his fighters, whilst with their mothers he gently jokes and sweetly smiles. Occasionally, he softly wanders around the hall, padding quietly over the hard concrete. As he does so, a viscerally tangible wave of intensity follows him. No one working the bags rests as Donald walks past. No one takes a breather from skipping. The speed ball picks up a gear in his silently inspiring presence. He excites the rhythms of the gym. Catching a glimpse of his distinctive shape over my shoulder, as I twisted a hook low into the bag, made me hit all the harder and with better form, all the while pretending that I had not noticed him [who, me? Yeah, I hit like this all the time]. His judgment and his presence have a powerfully motivating effect upon fighters, who often note the respect and affection they hold him in.

"He makes me think of Yoda... he doesn't say much, but when he does it's gunna be good" (Sid, a senior boxer at Butterworth).

Donald's character inspired an response in me and in others. His ability to affect the young men who train in his gym is something I find hard to express and certainly to explain, vaguely evidenced though keenly felt. It is, perhaps, something about the force of his gaze, his rolling Ulster brogue and his sheer presence. Gerry, contrastingly, is a much more energetic presence. He not only directs circuits at six o'clock every night, but he takes part as well, leading

through example by performing the exercises with good form and high intensity until the entire workout is complete. When he takes the junior fighters onto the pads in the ring, he gets on his toes, shadowing them, throwing his shoulders in feints and darting forward to put them on the back foot. I found Gerry to be the easiest trainer to talk to, as well as the most comfortable in my presence. Geoff is a brooding, older man, a less physical though no less intense character. If Donald has a capacity to affect people through his gaze and Gerry through his physical energy, then Geoff does so through his voice. A low, throaty and guttural Pendle roar. Geoff often works on sparring and on the hook and jab pads with the senior fighters, his voice carrying instructions that cut through the maddening intensity of a fight as clearly as any bell or any siren could.

As noted in foregoing chapters, although locally reputed to be a white gym, Butterworth ABC is only predominantly white. The charismatic characters noted above are white men who live in the Pendle Valley area, as are most of the gym's fifteen or so competitive boxers. Of the those elite fighters, two are young Asian men from Burnley. Each evening, outside of this competitive elite, there are usually a further twenty or so men training on the gym-floor, of whom a small number are Asian, typically. Whilst some characters attend every night, others are less frequent although regular attendees. Although the young Asian men who share the gym with their white contemporaries are comparatively few, at no point was it evident that Asian fighters were treated differently to white fighters within the hierarchical social arrangements described in this chapter. A key theme emerging in the following discussions is the operation of a purportedly *colour-blind meritocracy* in Butterworth. This apparent meritocracy does not foreclose the need to closely study how Burnley's colour-culture line falls across the gym-floor. Yet, in contrast to the eye-catching masculine roles being performed, the operation of race in the gym is comparatively subtle. Furthermore, the mention of raced difference is accorded a taboo status, as a *means of safeguarding the inspired social order* described in this chapter. In concert with the surly, taciturn masculinity authorised in the gym, this enables

young men of talent, Asian or white, to develop their abilities and to eventually compete for the club. This chapter details the micro-geographies of affiliation possible in Butterworth, through which young white and young Asian men share the achievement of inspired social order on the gym-floor. These social arrangements articulate physical training with the subtle latency of race to an *inspirational infrastructure* that is carefully managed by the aforementioned characters. This chapter intends to tease out the entanglement of masculinity, race, inspiration and personal ability in Butterworth ABC.

2. Doing-getting-on-in-the-gym

2.1 Learning the rules of the game

As a newcomer to Butterworth and to boxing training, I found myself well positioned for the task of learning to contribute to the achievement of an organised gym-floor. I discovered the rules, customs, mores and taboos of the club on a progressive, trial and error basis. Moving from somewhere between methodological strategy and inescapable convenience, I took on the position of the committed learner. I was eager to fit in and pay my dues. The discomforting experience of unfamiliarity I initially found myself amidst gradually subsided as it became apparent to me that Butterworth is a highly organised, potentially navigable space. The gym is a miraculous cooperative achievement. It gives a surprising example of the difficulty of achieving social order that Spinoza struggled with; how to manage a society where capable people inevitably abut one another.

Butterworth situates varied practices and complicated interactions within arrangements that are sometimes delicate and sometimes robust. A structure to what goes on in the gym emerges amidst the continuing fulfillment of, and reinvestment of significance in, a layering-up of more or less formal *rules*. As I became more familiar with the gym-floor, these rules offered me a map by which I could find initial points of navigation. In so doing, I achieved a routine of my own that seemed to fit the bill of appropriate behaviour. An ability to read

and act upon these rules is crucial if newcomers are to find their way around the furniture that litters and the personalities that populate the gym. Engaging in these practices of understanding and acting requires that inductees acquire certain *skills*. The demonstration of those skills allows people to do-getting-on-in-the-gym. Doing-getting-on-in-the-gym is strongly associated with the status of being a regular. However, becoming a regular is about much more than simply turning up on a regular basis. Indeed, in some cases it need not even require it. Rather, the demonstration of appropriate *attitudes* is the most conspicuous means and mark of getting-on at Butterworth. Doing-being-a-regular was precisely what I could not do, and importantly what I *felt* I could not do, in the vignette that opened this chapter. I felt awkward. Out of step. Marginal to the atmosphere I sensed in the gym. I found the combination of its unfamiliarity and intensity both exciting and nerve wracking, both compelling and repelling. My contrary feelings lasted for some time. Yet I demonstrably 'paid my dues' and learnt how to do-getting-on-in-the-gym. This section considers my passages through the rules, skills and attitudes that add up in Butterworth ABC.

Each evening the basic workout takes on a familiar structure, through which bodies and personalities gradually become accustomed to the regular arrangements achieved through the repeated generation and fulfillment of visible routines. At six o'clock, 'circuits' begin, lasting for about forty-five minutes. What remains of the evening is then occupied by fighters taking turns at a series of exercises; the heavy bag, shadow boxing, skipping, pad-work and sparring. After circuits, those looking to spar or work the pads must mark their interest with Geoff and Gerry. Throughout each evening the cadence of effort is paced by the cycling of three minute rounds of intense work interspersed by a single minute's rest, mimicking the pacing of a competitive boxing match. This metronomic rhythm is marked out by the siren noted in the vignette that opened this chapter; a discordant, shrill sound that could produce any number of affects in me. At times it would excitedly spur me into a heavy bag. At others it would make me feel sick with anticipation in the ring. It might provide relief to my

calves, shattered by a tenth straight round of skipping, or else cut off an aggressive salvo on the heavy bags. As I strove to push myself against physical exhaustion and incompetence, seeking to extend what I was capable of, it remained a frustrating mystery as to why this noise, 'identical' each time, might inspire or otherwise drain my spirit.

The familiarity of the nightly routine is underscored by a number of observable regularities, which are only occasionally accented by unwitting departures from their constitutive expectations. Older fighters do not overtake one another when doing laps of the gym. Lapping is typically only done by juniors, who like to race one another and whose progress through the ordered procession is ignored, or tolerated, by older members. The circuits are an intense, all or nothing affair. Fighters either complete the session in its entirety, or do not begin at all. Having begun, if they begin to ease off or coast through the stations they can expect a reprimand from Gerry. A strict discipline, applied to all of the young men taking part, encourages them to *temper* their experience of discomfort to get through the session; to manage the burning of muscles and the bursting of lungs and get through the required movements. Even after a single session as an excited and anxious beginner, rules such as these quickly became visible. I gained a provisional practical mapping by observing and participating in these regular and repetitive movements. The exercises involved in circuit training are relatively undemanding in terms of physical ability and are contoured by clearly visible, accessible rules. They offer an entry level of involvement for newcomers, or for members lacking in a combination of experience, boxing skills and fitness. Most of the club's money is gained from people who attend solely to participate in circuits. Despite the focus of the gym upon physical excellence and competitive success, it would not pay for Butterworth ABC to require a high level of ability and experience as a minimum requirement for entry to the gym-floor.

Bodies with different capacities for movement and of different shapes and colours circulate of an evening in Butterworth. The gym is used exclusively by male members, who, although mostly aged between eight and the early twenties, cover a wide range of ages. Furthermore, although Butterworth ABC is locally reputed as being a white gym, and indeed most of the young men using the gym are white, Butterworth draws young men together from across Burnley's colour-culture line. Donald and the other trainers occasionally, although non-pejoratively, refer to young Asian men in the gym as 'Pakistani lads'. Explicit comment on raced difference is not, however, a regular feature of the organisational achievement of Butterworth. This is not equivalent to the gym's social arrangements being denuded of raced significance; outside the elite cabal of competitive fighters and amongst the general membership, an understated raced micro-geography makes it mark within the gym's familiar routines. Groups of friends that come to the gym together very often remain in their cliques during the evening, especially when they are not regulars but are, instead, perhaps trying boxing out for the first time. On my own first evening of training, I would have gladly accepted a cohort to provide me with points of stability scarce within an initially unknown and unsettling place. When groups of young Asian men come into the gym they often end up training together during circuits and sharing equipment afterwards. Little bands of people, sticking together amidst an intense, busy and potentially alienating environment. Although groups of young white men also train together, darker pigmentation becomes quietly noticeable in the solacing separation carved out amidst lively exchanges of banter and the loud cajoling of Gerry and Geoff.

Amidst these routines, observation of and participation in organisational rules may require specific technical proficiencies. Doing-showing-an-interest in engaging in sparring or pad work (whilst not being overly, inappropriately insistent) is one such skill. Once circuits are completed, any other fighters who wish to spar or to work the pads will subtly register their interest to do so with the trainers. Gerry and Geoff mentally keep note of the order in which they are

to work with the fighters (although this order does not necessarily reflect that of the requests). Capable gym members give a knowing look to the trainer in the ring, a signal that might occasionally require verbal qualification, but usually does not. One evening, as I tried to register an interest in working the pads with Gerry, I made the mistake of lingering without having taken the steps necessary to make my intention clear. I was greeted testily; "are ye waiting to go on the pads or not?". Once I had become more accustomed to registering interest, having learnt by watching the senior fighters in the gym, and just as importantly with my embarrassment having finally subsided, I decided to give it another go. I caught Gerry's eye as he committed one of his occasional glances-around-the-ring in search of any sign of interest. Gerry checked, although less irritably; "are ye waiting?". Once we had successfully negotiated that occasion, with a little help from a few words, the communication of interest became unspoken and *comfortably* negotiated. The feeling of affirmation I gained from learning to navigate practices such as these was more particular than a broad notion of self-esteem might capture, conceived of as a palliative route away from a staid and unvarying disaffection. It is perfectly possible to jump back and forth between being proud, nervous, elated and embarrassed. Indeed, it is hard not to. Butterworth ABC demands an ability to refine this jumbled bag of feelings, cultivating a seamless synergy from a mixture of affects; one's response to Gerry's brusqueness; physical aggression; embarrassment at missing the pads and hitting the trainer's wrists; humility and deference in response to criticism, etc.

Gerry's character plays an important role in inducting new fighters to Butterworth. His character, confidence, and physical energy inspire trust amongst club members, who assume that he knows what he is doing when it comes to boxing and physical training. When rounding up the fighters for circuits, Gerry takes time to briefly chat with them. Perhaps about boxing, perhaps about other subjects. These chats are often about pastimes traditionally pursued in Lancashire by white men, whether an evening drinking

or a day spent ferreting in the Pendle area. Yet Gerry is equally energetic in pursuing conversations with the few Asian fighters who attend the gym. He ensures that everyone who comes into the gym, whether by themselves or in a group, is engaged in conversation. No one simply drops in or slips out unaccountably; Butterworth is not a public space nor an open amenity. As such, the grouping together of young men, which is conspicuously contoured by raced difference where those men are Asian, is prevented from becoming divisively ingrained beyond the trainers' influence. Gerry's personality and charisma, his style of engaging with people in a way that inspires them and makes them feel comfortable, has a distinctive socialising function in the gym. Whilst Donald is a figurehead for this cultural community, Gerry is the means by which newcomers receive an orienting induction that reproduces established ways of doing things.

The gym-floor is a highly organised space. It is full of bodies performing specific tasks and packed with equipment designed with particular practices in mind. A row of heavy bags are hung by chains on a series of metal frames extending down one of the gym's long walls. Each bag has a different shape, covering and density and offers a different pedagogical opportunity. Some allow the practice of body shots, uppercuts or straight rights and lefts. One simply consists of three car tires bolted together. This was my personal favourite, because it had a springy reaction to being punched, making it easier to snap back into a guard after throwing a shot. It was, however, lighter than the sand filled bags and as such more difficult to hit repeatedly in a manner that would keep it within reach. Carefully negotiated rules of interaction are arrayed around the power of these bags to distribute and comport bodies. Ad hoc arrangements, such as improvised queuing systems, emerge when fighters share a bag. These are naturally occurring, autonomous achievements of order, negotiated by individuals from within the gym's hierarchical system of authority. Much of the communication involved in these negotiations goes unspoken. Clashes are avoided by fighters staying beside the bag they are using during rest periods. Those seeking to ascertain whether a bag is free seek eye contact and read a

fighter's stance relative to the equipment. Although apparently resting, one may comport one's body as reportably-interested-in-a-piece-of-equipment by shaping one's feet, hips and shoulders, or by working through an imaginary combination. Misunderstandings occasionally arise where there is a failure in unspoken communication; perhaps where a fighter is too tired to remain reportably interested in a piece of equipment and is preoccupied instead with sucking in some more air, getting some more blood through to the finger tips or watching the sparring in the centre ring.

As noted above, friendship groups that perform circuits together are often contoured by race. But these groups are split up by the nature of training with a heavy bag, pad work or sparring; each of these are individualistic exercises. In turn, *this often results in bouts of unspoken communication between Asian and white contemporaries*. An understated, endogenous logic of interaction is established. The nascent micro-geography of race in the gym is disrupted by individualistic practices and Gerry's personality. Moreover, I am able to attest to the personal comfort and confidence that may be gained from successfully negotiating the gym. Gym-etiquette diminishes as a focus of anxiety as training increasingly becomes a means to the end of becoming a capable boxer. The rules of the game are increasingly negotiated without fully conscious thought and without feeling out of place. The parallel lives thesis is contradicted by the becoming routine of unspoken communication between Asian and white fighters busy navigating one another in a complicated space. The encounters they share become routinised as these fighters learn how to capably negotiate familiar characters; 'that lad I see every other night at boxing'. Those processes of learning are bound up in the individualistic practices of the gym, whereby Asian and white men are redistributed from their respective groups before being put into oblique contact. These young men become tied to one another through the various affectivities bound up in the complicated practices of gym etiquette. They cooperate to avoid breaking the seamless synergy of the gym, mutually

avoiding embarrassment and frustration whilst tempering their impulses to launch aggressively into the bag regardless of other gym users.

The rules detailed above provide evenings at Butterworth with a basic architecture. Within this framework, thirty or more variously capable people, of varying familiarity with one another, share a small and complicated space that brims with intensity and prickles with emotion. One of the most salient skills in the gym is the ability of fighters and trainers to engage in banter with one another. One evening in February, I sat on the hard wooden benches in the changing area, carefully wrapping my hands before I went to use the heavy bags. Three senior fighters sat with me, gloving-up in preparation for a sparring session. We were absent mindedly chatting when Geoff put his head around the door of the changing area, shouting; 'What are ye bloody doing? Having a mother's meeting? Bloody get out here!' There was a playful, humorous tone in his voice. It echoed in the laughter he provoked from the fighters in the cramped changing area. The rules of the situation were shifted and enlivened by this subtle use of humour; otherwise, it is hard to imagine Geoff telling fighters to do something and being laughed at. It is important to underline that the playful nature of the exchange did not make it any less serious as an instruction; the three fighters were very soon in the ring, getting down to business.

Not all banter has a similar content, tone or organisational function. Managing a playful tone requires sensitivity to the *personalities* involved. When Donald play-fights with the younger brothers of fighters it has a different *atmosphere* to the cajoling, motivating banter used by the trainers to spur the fighters on. Finding myself in the position of being one of the older men training in Butterworth, the playful exchanges I was involved in were typically with men of a similar age or older and about the rigors of training; "when he said 'we're going up to twenty' [repetitions] I thought 'yeah, right mate'" (A fighter called Neville, speaking to me in the changing area after circuits one evening). My attempts at playful conversation with younger members of the club were met largely with smiles of

toleration or mutual awkwardness and marked with long silences and misunderstandings. Martin, an older teenager, showed a willingness to talk to me after I showed interest in his amateur boxing career. Our conversations were punctuated by what I experienced as uneasy silences. It was visible to me (in his shifting eyes, uncertain movements, but something else as well, hard to define) that he was often left casting around for something to say. The 'craic' between fighters, which may be thought of as something like rapport as energies are swapped in playful and witty exchanges, is an example of a tangible though obliquely reportable dimension of interaction. Just as being comfortable in someone's presence requires a degree of rapport, bantering relies upon a mutual concordance of affect. The confidence and humour gained from such exchanges boosted my training by making me feel good about myself. When rapport was slow to come, a stilling of that same sense of progress could render my evening's work flat and uninspiring. I had to become adept at 'picking myself up' when this happened, so as to recover from the loss of purpose and momentum.

This play between affects, which variously strengthened and weakened my ability to train and to pick myself up in response to a low point, significantly complicates broad diagnoses of disaffection as a condition that people are rendered affectively helpless by. It also contrasts with studies of young men in urban areas beset by and apparently hostage to monotone, negative affections. Banter and rapport are integral to the inspirational infrastructure of Butterworth ABC. Butterworth's competitive fighters often gather to share jokes between rounds. They chat whilst leaning on the ring aprons, waiting for their turn to spar. In contrast, amongst the general membership there was comparatively very little banter. The mood of sociability amongst members was marked by a respectful, reassuring familiarity, maintained by initial greetings, occasional comments and typically impeccable gym etiquette. Notably, most of the young Asian men who attended the gym were amongst the general membership. As such, they were not often involved in lively exchanges of banter. As noted

above, the congealing of raced contours around groups of young men is interrupted in the gym. The taciturn masculinity authorised in the gym depends upon the individualistic nature of boxing practice. Yet it does not make for lively personal relationships. As such, *those contours are constantly at threat of being reestablished* where the affectual bonds between fighters are steady and slow burning, rather than volatile and energetically transversal. Friendship groups brought into the gym have a propensity to re-congeal. Although the web of affiliation stretching across the gym-floor enables tacit intercultural interactions, it is very far from a working through or a celebration of difference.

The successful sharing of this complicated space is premised upon unspoken, collectively achieved rule bound negotiations. A collegiate atmosphere is tangible at Butterworth. Intensities are generated and exchanged throughout the gym, as maybe as many as thirty young men, who often might not be said to really 'know' one another, negotiate their physical presences and the rubbing along of their personalities. Their affiliations are not reportably a matter of recognising or negotiating cultural differences, nor of coming to understandings that reconcile raced experiences of place. Rather, improvised management of the physical presence of contemporaries is increasingly conducted from the 'corner of the eye' and at the edge of sense as one learns to use the gym-floor; these are the immediate concerns of maintaining Butterworth's tacit rules of association. This is not to argue that race somehow disappears with the increasing salience of practice and affect. The operation of race is in some cases reportably exaggerated and in others reportably diminished by the shifting of affiliation through the gym-floor. Race is exaggerated where affiliations congeal unchallenged between Asian and white men, respectively, amidst a masculine, steady and taciturn sociality; where Asian men stick to a corner of the gym and have limited interactions with white gym members. However, raced division is accordingly diminished where individualistic practice and charismatic characters provide social-affective hubs, around which bodies

and sentiments are shaped and redistributed, via gym etiquette, in a manner that mitigates raced separation.

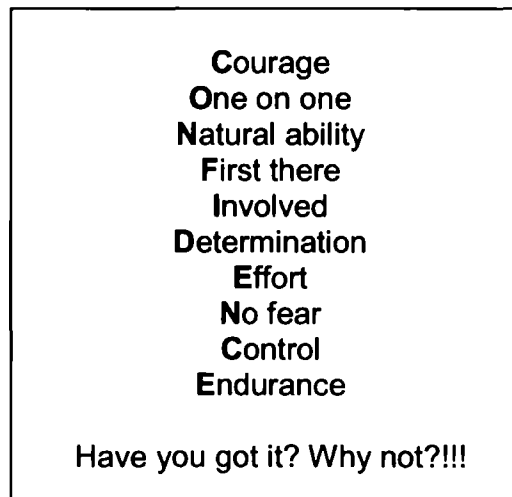
Ambitions to finally explain the relationships seen in Butterworth by labeling people as boxers, trainers, seniors, men, whites or Asians will quickly run up against limits. But the subtle operation of these constructions may be traced along the complex contours of variously practised and affectively charged affiliations. A plenitude of rapport or inspiration might enliven, or alternatively a sink hole of dissonance might still, interactions that occur in-the-work of achieving the gym-floor. These interactions may congeal or dissipate points of raced social dislocation. When banter fails to provoke rapport and conversational flow is staccato, or else where social affiliations inconspicuously tick-along rather than build an to affectual crescendo, the achievement of social order slows, or stalls. It begins to crystallise. Race gets a chance to reassert divisions seen in segregations across the town and cited in public memories of the 2001 disturbances. The Asians might be seen to train *over there*, in what is, after all, the local *white* gym.

2.2 Showing the right attitude

Butterworth ABC is an ongoing, skilled production of organisational rules. Negotiation of these rules requires that young men cultivate and demonstrate *attitudes* that are reportably *appropriate* to the gym's authorised masculinity. This section considers three attitudes that mark men out as successfully doing-getting-on-at-the-gym; being *gym-savvy*, being *serious* and paying *respect*.

Being reportably gym-savvy is achieved through practised observation of, and eventual participation in, the common achievement of the rules of the gym in a demonstrably *confident* manner. It involves the acquisition and deployment of specific social skills, such as those of unspoken communication and banter. It also requires one to give an impression that these skills come naturally, as though one never even had to learn them in the first place. A young fighter who

is gym-savvy is able to avoid inappropriate behaviours and will capably negotiate tacit taboos without hint of a problem. My own experiences as a newcomer to Butterworth, uncertain in an unfamiliar place, involved a trial and error process of learning how to do-getting-on-in-the-gym. As I progressively acclimatised to the rules, skills and attitudes woven together on the gym-floor, my nervous, self-conscious observance of the rules of the game became less nervous and less self conscious.



Sign hanging above the gym-floor in Butterworth ABC

My acclimatisation to Butterworth entailed an emotive and embodied adaptation to the rigors of training. I became able to complete the required movements with greater vigor, and could better temper my desire to ease off so as to relieve the swelling of intensity in the bottom of my lungs. The skill and fitness demanded by the many different exercise techniques used in the gym became less daunting. I learnt how to skip in a manner reportably consonant with that of other fighters (on one foot, two steps on each foot, one step on each foot, although I never managed to cross the rope in front of me). I became capable of negotiating the queuing system for fighters waiting to spar or to go on the pads. Tacit communication became a regular part of each evening, and I managed it without a spike in anxiety. If communication broke down, I no longer automatically blamed myself nor felt embarrassed, but rather suspected that my

counterpart had missed a signal or step. A greater variety of rules and possibilities for their infraction became visible as my apprehension of the atmospheric shifts generated by different behaviours heightened. Newcomers seemed more conspicuous as I felt increasingly confident and comfortable. As they became more comfortable in the gym, they too seemed more confident; walking with purpose through their routine, watching other people less and reportably concentrating on their own training; eyes down, expressionless faces absorbed in intensity, ensconced from idle conversation. After an initial period of tenure, members typically acquire a basic mastery of the necessary skills and a knowledge of how to pace themselves through a workout. They become reportably gym-savvy in their attitude to the gym-floor and to their contemporaries.

A newcomer cannot perpetually remain amidst the secure bearings provided by a group of friends if they are to go through the practices and interactions by which a working knowledge of the gym-floor is gained. The young men who came to Butterworth in such groups, whether Asian or white, could not make the transition to being gym-savvy in the same way; they may have felt confident, but something was not quite right. They often seemed cocky, rather than sure of their capabilities and secure in their status. It was inappropriate. Competitive fighters and other established regulars train in a manner that chimes with a certain masculinity; independent, aggressive, sullen and brooding. Very few young Asian men come to train alone at the gym. Butterworth's local reputation as a white gym may well have encouraged them to come in groups, although this leads further into conjecture than I am willing to follow. However, it was clear that whilst training individually was the familiar route to being reportably gym-savvy, this route was interrupted for several young Asian men by the subtle and tacit operation of race. Rather than race determining behaviour in any way, race-as-separation became real where pigmentation marked the contours of social affiliation. However, this was clearly a contingent, rather than an inevitable outcome of the co-presence of white and Asian young men. A

senior Asian competitive boxer called Hamid introduced his younger brother to the gym during my time at Butterworth. Yet because Hamid's brother came to Butterworth via an affiliation marked by a fraternal imbalance of influence, he was effectively unfettered by association with a larger group of peers. In short, Hamid did not want to hang around with his little brother. Deprived of the comfort of a cohort from whom he may have expected solidarity, he soon became gym-savvy by adopting and demonstrating the individualistic masculine role authorised on the gym-floor.

Being serious, as reportably having-a-serious-attitude-towards-training, is intimately related to appropriate expressions of masculine confidence. In Butterworth, one cannot be *taken* seriously *being* serious without being reportably gym-savvy in this specific manner. Butterworth's competitive boxers are the most unequivocal expression of the gym's young men being taken seriously. Their abilities and successes represent the ultimate product of spending each and every long evening at Burnside Mill. This is evidenced by the amount of time put into preparing them for competition, the extra trainers brought in to work with them and their invitations to the seated meal at the club's exclusive annual fund raising dinner. Most significantly, in terms of their standing on the gym-floor, they are invited to write their names on the external wall of the changing area, where club boxers past and present record their presence, abilities and achievements. In the gym's hierarchy of authority, senior fighters are closer to the trainers than they are their fellow gym members; they spend more time with them, speak to them more and share a greater degree of rapport. The way in which the trainers engage with the competitive boxers is distinctive, both in terms of the delivery of a personally tailored programme and in their *manner* of interaction with them. Gerry and Geoff are often much more *animated* when working with the competitive fighters. They bark orders at them, becoming frustrated when their charges fail to follow their instructions. The central interactions of the pedagogical relationship between trainer and boxer

are focused, energetic exchanges. They talk and gesture expressively, transmitting passion, motivation and intention.

Despite the hegemonic masculinity and hierarchy of authority seen on the gym-floor, there are a variety of ways in which a man in Butterworth ABC may be taken seriously. Older boxers may no longer compete, but be taken seriously nonetheless by establishing rapport with other gym members. Several (obviously physically limited) middle aged men use the gym confidently and competently. They do not attend circuits, but rather divide their time between gently training and socialising with Donald, Geoff and Gerry. The most fundamental element of being taken seriously is to reportably train hard and correctly. It is difficult to imagine a gym member being taken seriously without a mixture of the following elements; participating in the achievement of an ordered gym-floor; building a degree of rapport with other members; and capably negotiating a physical regime. Yet is important to signal the variety of ways in which young men in Butterworth may be held in esteem by their peers, pace monolithic accounts of male disaffection and a temptation to imagine its resolution through the promotion of a generic self-esteem. I felt that I came to be taken more seriously as my appearances became regular and my proficiency at training increased. In contrast, one particular young fighter, Max, was quite clearly desperate to be taken seriously. But because he was seen to be a braggart, he never was whilst I was a regular at Butterworth. He made the mistake of failing to read that overt braggadocio was anathema to the deferent masculinity preferred on the gym-floor.

Demonstrating mechanical competence at exercises and having an athletic physique are further important elements of being-taken-seriously-being-serious. A newcomer entered the gym one evening, muscular, lean and with a reportable 'game face' on from the moment he came through the door. After changing in the separated area, he walked with purpose over to a heavy bag, avoiding eye contact and small talk. He threw compact punches, aggressive

punches, insistent combinations for two rounds. Before Gerry interrupted. Gerry asked him about his age and his previous boxing experience. On the majority of occasions, newcomers to the gym are not extended this sort of interest. Gerry immediately recognised that this guy was serious. Where fighters are judged as being serious, or otherwise, and where personal aptitude for boxing is being reviewed, *constructions of race play no reportable part in those judgments*. Talent is talent, and it is in the interest of Butterworth ABC to identify and nurture any that enters the gym. There is no raced ceiling of progression at the club for Hamid and his brother, nor indeed for any capable young man. Butterworth ABC is no post-racial oasis amidst Burnley's post-industrial urban hinterlands. Yet it is reportably the case that race applies no specific restriction to a young Asian being taken seriously as a capable, fighting man. The subtle operation of race through social groups, as noted above, might militate against a young Asian man buying into the individualistic, surly masculinity preferred by the club's fighters. However, the criteria and practices by which personal capacities are judged cannot afford to find recourse to racist logics if quality competitors are to be attracted and developed.

Being-taken-seriously-being-serious might also take different forms according to one's *motivation* for training. A gym member's motivation might be articulated through two categories of intention used by boxers in Butterworth; being in the gym 'to box' or else 'to train'. However, lived experiences of motivations for training at Butterworth exceed what may be neatly articulated in terms of these purpose-determined goals. Instigations of intensity by particular characters suggest a dimension of motivation that is hard to dam up in words; the rush of effort that follows Donald's occasional perambulations; the 'red mist' that descends as trainers goad lackluster efforts; the swapping of infectious humour as banter is exchanged. These *motivations-in-motion* are difficult to definitively report as functional to the ongoing achievement of this or that specific aspect of social order. At times, they may not seem to have a purpose at all; why, for instance, did I get into a habit of wrapping my hands two or more times before I

gloved-up, just to get the right feel? Yet such idiosyncrasies intimately inform experiences of place, and intricately contribute to the ongoing achievement of a *serious training atmosphere*. The gym has a buzz, an addictive and gripping energy that cannot be explained as the sum of its reportable parts. There is no unambiguous cause of, nor an indisputable purpose to, the rhythmic aggression that builds as one drives fists into bags full of sand. It rises up and takes a hold of the limbs as the knuckles numb, becoming its own meaning and possessing its own justification. The instigation, recuperation and management of that aggression is a cord amidst the tangling of events that must be capably negotiated for an inspiring atmosphere to emerge.

In order to be gym-savvy and to be taken-seriously-being-serious, it is necessary to be demonstrably *respectful* to the reputations, personalities and heritages alive in Butterworth. Doing-showing-respect is perhaps the most fundamental requisite of doing-getting-on-in-the-gym. It involves accountably (in both an ethnomethodological and a broader, moral sense) conducting oneself in a certain manner. Profanity is not heard in the gym. Passing comment about raced difference is also strictly taboo; whilst race operates in the gym, this is subtle and tacit (at least from the perspective of a young white and male author in a gym mostly used by young white men). If the trainers consider that younger fighters are 'having a laugh' at the expense of a serious-training-atmosphere, they will publicly chastise them. Marcus, an older man who occasionally leads fitness work with the juniors, immediately picked up on any conversations or tones he considered out of place. 'Horse play' only goes as far as gentle verbal banter. Even so, it is strictly restricted to certain situations and places, such as in the changing area or by Donald's office. During training, play is inappropriate and trainers sharply discipline younger fighters who 'play fight'. Respect must be shown to certain characters. My rapport with Donald picked up considerably when I began to show an interest in how he organised boxing shows and arranged matches. As we began to hold conversations about these and other subjects, he greeted me more warmly and began to refer to me as 'Robbie'.

Older fighters would often listen patiently as Donald told them about his experiences of 'the game'. Donald would 'light up', suddenly departing from his earnest manner to become much more expressive.

Respecting certain characters is about more than striking up personal relationships. Doing-showing-respect requires a sensitivity to how the club's history penetrates contemporary practice. Much of the talk in-the-work, but not about-the-work, returns to subjects such as where former fighters are now and what they are doing, or what happened during this fight or on that evening. That history, as narrated in the gym, is one of strong, young white men training alongside and competing against one another. Demonstrating respect for those legacies requires awareness of how absent characters and past events remain salient in public memory. On my first evening at Butterworth, Donald proudly pointed to the outer wall of the changing area, where past and present fighters have written their names and upon which the trophies they have won are arranged. A sign on the wall reads 'Boxers Only'. The significance of this place and the personal histories it evokes are keenly felt by club members. Max earned a stern chastisement one evening, as he went to write his name on the wall before he had been in a competitive fight. Some of the more worn names on the wall have RIP written beside them in bright red letters. As does one of the more recently added ones. Newspaper clippings, reporting the exploits of Butterworth's fighters and managers, are stuck beside the scribbled names and across the wall behind the office. Promotional posters, paintings and sketches of infamous fighters and famous fights turn up here and there around the gym; pinned upon pillars, stuck onto walls or leaning on shelves against mucky windows. These artefacts connect Butterworth to boxing history, so marked and charged by raced meanings and social contexts.

So whilst the pictures in the newspaper clippings are of young white men, images of black and Asian boxers feature around the gym as well; behind heavy bags, fixed onto lockers, framed and mounted beside shadow boxing mirrors;

anywhere they may catch the eye. Later sections of this chapter illustrate that the public archiving of social memory is important to the achievement of the gym-floor as an inspiring space. The above discussion indicates that inspiration must be expressed *appropriately* in the gym, through a gym-savvy, serious and respectful attitude. A sense of propriety emerges via authorised masculine roles that may be characterised as independent, surly and taciturn. Above, it is indicated that this masculinity conditions possibilities for affiliations that traverse, but also for separations that reassert, Burnley's colour-culture line. The historical roots of that masculinity emplace a concoction of local white legacies and the raced histories of boxing within an inspirational infrastructure (see below). It would be naive to assume that young Asian fighters will not be inspired by tales of white antecedents; it would equally be presumptuous to hold that Burnley's young Asian men will unproblematically connect with a public archive of violent, strong, young white men. Yet the gathering of inspiration amidst a serious training atmosphere is not reducible to young men finding direct inspiration from a single source. Lived experiences of the gym's energising atmosphere exceed the sum of its parts. Artefacts are more arcanelly implicated in the rarified atmosphere found where places are steeped in personal histories, intimately signed with dear memories and missed friends. The gym's atmosphere is not a simple addition of otherwise estranged, racialised experiences of inspiration. Butterworth ABC establishes an endogenous logic of interaction, emerging from the club's history to cohere a place shared by white and Asian bodies and personalities.

2.3 Learning to contribute to social order

The masculine attitudes authorised in Butterworth are tacitly understood by regulars capably doing-getting-on-in-the-gym. Achievement of and adherence to the rules of the game allows mistakes, embarrassment and confusion to be avoided, so as the serious business of training may be accomplished. As a new gym member I learnt these tacit knowledges through trial and error. As ethnomethodology suggests, the boundaries of propriety supported by rules,

skills and attitudes gain a particular and educative visibility when their constitutive expectations are confounded. The discussion of ethnomethodology offered in Chapter 4 indicates that the breaking of tacit, mutual projections of behaviour will subsequently see a reorientation of social order. Boundaries of appropriate behaviour are restated where taboos are broken, as when Max suggested writing his name on the wall spoken of above. When rules are broken, social skills fall short and necessary attitudes are not displayed, the organisation of the gym-floor may be glimpsed by inductees. At such moments, the ongoing achievement of this space becomes apparent in new, educative and most likely embarrassing or painful ways.

Social organisation in Butterworth is premised upon the recuperation of the mess that attends breaches in established regularities and routines. I quite regularly messed up during my time at Butterworth. But in doing do, I gained insight into how the gym-floor works; when I did something awkward or inappropriate that betrayed my disability to play the rules of the game or display the right attitude. Taboos exemplify obliquely reportable, ephemerally tangible phenomena that nonetheless have a reportable organisational and pedagogical effect. One evening I neglected to mark my exit with the trainers as I left the gym. As I passed through the door Geoff conspicuously shouted "see ye later Rob" across the gym. A rush of embarrassment taught me a little bit more about what not to do in Butterworth; a rush that I tempered as my disposition became inculcated to avoid such situations. Contrastingly, there were moments where I received confirmation of my having acting appropriately, which increased my sense of getting-on-in-the-gym. I learnt to communicate my interest in working the pads with Gerry and received slaps on the back and words of encouragement as I completed sets of exercises. My ability to train and to fight appreciated, tangible in the strength of my legs and the compact, violent movements I could achieve. Through the pedagogical effect of learning to temper and in turn avoid embarrassment or nervous apprehension, I progressively learnt to forge strengthening affective relationships with people

and things on the gym-floor. I found my patient and increasingly successful navigation of this complicated culture *affectively rewarding*.

One evening in June, a newcomer to the gym called Michael used the skipping ropes immediately after circuit training had been completed. He took up a rope but soon realised that he could not skip. Whereas in similar circumstances I abandoned the rope and returned to it another night, Michael persisted. It was hard not to be impressed by this tenacity. But as he flailed away, he would repeatedly pass apologetic comment to those training around him; "It's hard isn't it"; "I just can't skip". At one point another fighter kindly reassured him that he had also found it difficult when he started. Later in the evening, on entering the changing area, Michael again commented on his difficulties jumping rope. He did not realise that his apologetic attitude was more out of place regarding the gym's prevailing masculinity than was his inability to skip. Michael's behaviour illustrates that breaching behaviours are often responded to by attempts to manage the messy feelings thrown up at the fringes of social order. Practices are deployed as means of navigating breaks in routine and failures in communication, potentially recuperating points of social orientation. We might think of Michael's behaviour as a naive effort at doing-saving-face, an attempt to gloss over his physical incompetence and temper the surge of embarrassment that, from experience, I guessed he might be amidst. I could empathise, as seemingly could the boxer who offered him reassurance, with the rush of embarrassment that curdles the top of the stomach when an apparently hopeless inability to perform a task is exposed in the gym.

There were numerous examples of boxers violating taboos in Butterworth. As I became more comfortable training in the gym, these instances became apparent to me more regularly. In late April, a newcomer trained without his shirt on. He spent a conspicuously unusual amount of time in front of the mirrors, rolling his shoulders and throwing feints, all the while intently studying his torso. My mind drifted back to Donald's characterisation of 'cotton wool

throwers' on my first night at the gym. This young man trained in isolation, as befitting the manly independence valued by the club. But he was not approached by anyone. Contrastingly, some weeks later another newcomer came in wearing the correct dress code (shorts and a short sleeved t-shirt), went quietly to a corner of the gym and threw hard shots at a heavy bag. He seemed to already exhibit a high degree of gym-savvy and a serious attitude; he was direct, confident and respectful in his approach to training and was soon being courted by Gerry to come to train at the club regularly. Moreover, fighters who 'get above themselves' are often 'shot down' by others who are already adept at doing-getting-on-in-the-gym and are thereby animated with confidence. One of the younger club members enjoyed bragging about the power of his right hand, although Sid and some of the other senior fighters were quick to suggest otherwise, bantering with him and yet not letting his claims go unchallenged. The more outrageous the claims, the more cutting the retorts, perhaps functioning to inculcate a little humility, although it was not immediately forthcoming. This episode is a further manifestation of the gym's hierarchical structure, which requires a degree of deference. As such, these young men are very far from the out of control yobs and hooligans that feature in popular discourse. They cooperatively contest a sense of respectability that is keenly pursued in the gym.

The culmination of rules, social skills and attitudes in Butterworth adds up to a moral economy of behaviour marked by displays of authorised masculinity. The boundaries of that masculinity are actively marked by gym members through the observance of taboos; behaviours considered disrespectful, cocky or intrusive are confronted, often provoking embarrassment or discomfort that must be tempered if one is to get-on-on-the-gym. The assumptions that structure the gym-floor suddenly become visible where taboos are broken, order falls away and the habits, routines and skills through which personalities and characters interact temporarily collapse. Butterworth is achieved by virtue of emotional and practical responses to observable departures from the smooth

running of social order. Within this moral economy, the taboo regarding the mention of race holds particular status. Race goes unspoken to such an extent that it is not possible to say that its mention is reportably policed in the same way as the gym's authorised masculinity is. However, as noted above, it would be naïve to consider that the gym-floor of Butterworth implements a post-racial society amidst Burnley's urban hinterlands. As noted above, whilst the gym's meritocracy is functionally colour blind, its achievement cannot help but stumble into and work through the subtle operation of raced significances that bleed in from Burnley. However, in sharing the ongoing achievement of the gym-floor, young Asian and white men must temper their affective experiences in mutual proximity with one another. This chapter, and indeed the following one, argue that a culturally located temperance of emotions is necessary to achieve inspired social order in Burnley's gyms, and that within that context endogenous logics of interaction elaborate that may connect young white and Asian men in ways not possible elsewhere in Burnley.

Whilst the gym's organisation is compromised by eruptions of the unexpected, it is also contingent upon such events. Gym members learn by messing up and by finding the limits of their capacities. Without their doing so, it would be hard to envisage the induction of new members and the transitions that the gym must go through to survive. Just as Butterworth needs new fighters, young men coming to the gym seek to develop in some way, whether their ambitions are of competing, losing weight or becoming 'hard'. Fighters may be asked to assist in running the gym by taking on new roles. My own confidence soared when I was asked to lead the circuits. Where unexpected moments are a prelude to realignments of social order, they are accented by idiosyncrasies of personality. Max seemed to make the same mistake of play fighting again and again, despite repeatedly being told not to. Different personalities carve out roles and relationships necessary to the ongoing achievement of a functional gym-floor that is perpetually amidst transition. During the ongoing flow of organisational alignment and personal transformation, *Butterworth acts as a mediating cultural*

context between personal transformations and social transitions of the kind discussed in Chapter 2. Burnley's period of post-war immigration from South Asia is expressed by presence of Asian men training in the gym. Despite Burnley's fractious racial politics, the ongoing achievement of authorised masculine roles holds together an inspirational culture in which white and Asian men cooperatively achieve social order. So whilst the operation of race in Butterworth is subtle and unspoken, this is a remarkable achievement.

3. Putting a fighter together

3.1 More than the sum of movements

The training regimes seen at Butterworth carefully target a range of specific motile, sensate and affective capacities essential to putting a fighter together. A solid technique is built from good fundamentals. The capacities required to box are identified and worked upon separately, before being combined to develop a body that is capable of fighting. The varied assortment of repetitive movements, sensations and affects that young men encounter are carefully tailored to develop them as fighters. Whilst no two personalities, physiques or training regimes are the same, all of Butterworth's boxers reportably engage in formalised repertoires of exercises designed to produce bodies and minds able to fight within a style sketched by Queensbury rules and fleshed out by personal improvisation. Those exercises are intimately constitutive of the masculinity authorised on the gym-floor. As such, it would be possible to give an account of the pedagogical content of boxing as a form of power-as-dressage. More immediately, tracing the practical accomplishment of a boxing physique and disposition will build towards better understandings of the affective capacities of these purportedly disaffected young white men. The following discussion keeps in view the characterisation of capacities to affect, to be affected and to temper affects suggested in Chapter 3. Expressions of these capacities are instrumental to the subtle operation of race on the gym-floor. As such, they bear complicated significance for Burnley's racial politics and stand to significantly

complicate the ways in which Burnley's young white men may be thought of as politically capable.

The basic movements that compose a boxing technique are summoned in the coordinated use of a variety of punches, combinations, defensive postures and footwork. Training begins with conceptually disaggregating a sound technique into movements that are worked upon in isolation. The movements involved in circuit training are each oriented toward the inculcation of a boxing comportment. They include; abdominal twists (to mimic the twisting of the torso that augments the power and reach of a punch, especially a hook to the body); isometric exercises, involving raising one's arms above shoulder level for periods of time (to build the static strength required to hold hands in a defensive position throughout a fight); alternate stepping exercises (to develop tensile strength in the heel and give a springy quality to a step, allowing body weight to be sharply transferred into punches), etc. The bag and pad exercises performed after the completion of circuits continue to develop these themes. Fighters learn how to throw specific punches and combinations, developing speed and accuracy but also saving their hands by not punching too hard, learning instead to temper the flow of aggression as they strike shiny, hard leather. Gerry often demands three minutes of constant jabbing, so as to target and exhaust the muscle groups recruited in throwing the most fundamental punch in boxing, thereby drilling it into muscle memory.

A further set of techniques are used to 'put it all together'. Correct shadow boxing requires staying on toes, putting combinations together and 'staying busy' for three minutes, moving the head and changing angles. An important element of effective shadow boxing is watching oneself in a mirror during the exercise. Five body length mirrors are propped against the wall at the back of the gym, providing visual feedback that prompts a straightening of backs and an increase in work rate. Faces became stony set and there is very little looking around the gym when they are in use. Working the pads and sparring are the

two most important techniques by which a fighter comes together prior to competition. A competitive fight demands that one reacts to a 'live' opponent, as oppose to heavy bags or skipping ropes with more regular and therefore readily anticipated responses to the application of force. Learning to use a heavy bag involves becoming accustomed to how each bag reacts to being hit in different ways, and positioning one's body to allow another punch to be thrown as it swings back into reach. Trainers might also improvise with equipment. Geoff often stands by a heavy bag swinging a skipping rope between a fighter's forward fist and the leather, timing a rhythm for the jabs whilst harrying him for a sharper delivery. Speed balls are designed to react in a less predictable manner to being hit. The skill required to progress through these apparatuses is one of learning to *anticipate* how each reacts. These skills of anticipation inculcate a layered comportment into a body progressively more capable of boxing.

Sparring and pad work offer markedly different pedagogical opportunities to bag work and shadow boxing. They demand a different order of anticipatory skills, testing these against a partner *whose movements, intentions and feelings one must anticipate*. Pad work involves a trainer wearing thickly padding gloves (which act as targets) and calling the required punches and combinations to the boxer. A bag will consistently react to the same punch in a similar manner. Contrastingly, a fighter does not know what punches a trainer might call, so they must be ready for anything. It is important to throw a variety of punches from a neutral, evenly balanced stance, to which one must return after each punch or combination is thrown. Trainers will even occasionally try to hit the fighter with the pad; playfully, but so as to make a serious point. Sparring demands similar anticipatory skills, but moves closer to replicating an in-fight situation, albeit with a faux competitive and less intense atmosphere. Learning to achieve this atmosphere is difficult, but absolutely crucial to learning how to box. It involves tacitly understanding how *aggressive* it is *appropriate* to be; reading the aggression of one's partner, whilst following the instructions shouted from ringside by the trainer and accordingly tempering one's own affective

responses. Boxers must learn how to 'keep their head' when painfully struck and resist 'backing away' when under attack. The most skilled practitioners are capable of more closely recreating competition without their aggression spilling over into a confrontation. This would mark a departure from the gym's respectful training atmosphere and from the pedagogical purpose of the session. Matthew and Ben, two senior fighters in the club, shared sessions so intense that they would often finish with blood smeared across their faces and their torsos rigid with bruises. Yet sessions would end with them breaking out in laughter and hugging, the need to *manage their discomfort* and to *summon aggression* suddenly lifted by a wailing, discordant siren.

Sparring is illustrative of possibilities of social affiliation in Butterworth ABC. It is a complicated, physically demanding practice that is cooperatively achieved by individuals cultivating a range of affective capacities. Aggression is summoned and tempered by each partner, placing sparring somewhere between fighting and dancing, and between competition and training. Where young Asian and white men spar, they share in a cultural practice that is powerfully evocative of images of the physical confrontations of the summer of 2001. Yet despite the slamming of fists and the contortion of faces, the rampant aggression of that night and the tempered fury of sparring could not be more different. These anticipatory, improvised interactions are too complicated and contingent to be tidily narrated as mutual respect. Moreover, sparring is not a celebration nor a negotiation of diversity. Tank and Hamid, two of the gym's senior boxers, are regular sparring partners. The sessions they share are enabled by the suppression of the reportable salience of race through an authorised masculinity that is crucial to the achievement of the gym as an inspiring cultural venue. The *endogenous logic of interaction* managed through sparring challenges the stark notion of parallel lives, lived out in Burnley Wood and Daneshouse and punctuated by nervous glances across Manchester Road and chance encounters in the Burnley indoor markets. Through the emotionally temperate practice of sparring, varied personal abilities establish affiliations that

confound the notion that all Burnley's disaffected young white men are capable of is racism and rioting.

A fighter must, therefore, be more than a summation of programmed movements and rigidly inculcated comportment. Boxers pass through a culturally ingrained pedagogical regime that entails progressively graded and intricately related praxes. Habits are layered into a body that becomes progressively more capable of engaging in pugilism. Muscle memory develops as the mind garners an increasingly adequate idea of what that body is capable of (see Spinoza on parallelism). Boxing training sees an ongoing play between learning specific movements and developing a capacity to respond to the unexpected. The combination-ball (a round ball attached to the floor and ceiling by elasticised bands) remained a mystery to me for my first two months in the gym. On being hit, it would spring back in what seemed to be a random direction. My initial attempts were cut short by embarrassment at throwing punches to where the ball was a split second before; nothing looks quite so out of place as throwing a punch that misses, twisting the body into a vulnerable position.

I learnt how to anticipate the ball by watching a young Asian fighter use it; his stance remained compact as he sharply popped out alternating straight rights and lefts, working a rhythm whereas I threw shots and *then* tried to track the ball's response. Learning to make use of the apparatus provided a culturally ingrained pedagogical rationale for a subtle, unspoken intercultural interaction. However, after using the ball on another night before moving onto the shadow boxing mirror beside it, the same fighter pointedly came over and threw a searing, precise combination before walking away. I sensed I had been put in my place. Whilst the opportunity to learn from other fighters may strike up intercultural interactions, such an affectively varied and practically complicated culture as Butterworth is inherently unpredictable, because *it is populated by individuals rather than by disaffected automatons*. A fighter's resentment at

wounded pride might result in race divisively reasserting itself as part of the recuperative work of doing-saving-face; 'that Asian's trying to show me up'.

3.2 Pedagogy and affective capacities

I was painfully aware of physical capacities being etched through my body. On the day after my first training session at Butterworth, I could not draw a deep breath without an intense pain jabbing between my ribs, the result of forcefully exhaling with every punch the night before. Holding my arms in a full-guard was stiff and sore. A sharp pain ran down the front of my shoulder. Another ran up the inside of my calves, making walking difficult. Movements repeated the night before were mapped across my body in pain. Once-prosaic movements now recalled the intensity of the previous night's serious-training-atmosphere, physically manifest in torn muscle fibres and accumulations of lactic acid. Dimensions of my muscles that I had never felt before now screamed out for my attention. I was unbelievably hungry and ate the first of what was to become my regular breakfast of six eggs, some fish and two or three wholemeal rolls. As the weeks passed, along with training sessions and countless eggs, the pain became less intense. When working the heavy bag or the pads, my default comportment was to hold my hands up and before me. What once felt *uncomfortable* now felt *correct*. Although it remained tiring to maintain a fighting posture, slipping out of it prompted unease [has Donald seen?!]. Watching myself in the mirror whilst shadow boxing reminded me how lazy and inappropriate it looks when a fighter carries his hands by his waist. I *felt compelled* to correct my posture, rather than motivated to do so because I *reasoned* that it was what a boxer should do. The intensities traced through my body fed this compulsion that I became. Butterworth was contouring my body as a bundle of capacities for moving and feeling.

The pedagogies ingrained in Butterworth's gym culture see intentions to move and feel communicated in the form of instruction. This was often a source of frustration for trainers seeking to teach a fighter how to summon aggression.

During sparring, Geoff leans over the ropes to aggressively bark instructions. His gravelly voice cuts through the inspired concentration of competition to keep chins tucked, jabs snapping and feet moving. In contrast, on the odd occasions when Donald ran a sparring session his voice assumed a pleading tone, desperate for his instructions to be heeded. When 'working the corner' at regional boxing shows, Donald adopts a gentle manner; resting on one knee, speaking quietly, smiling, holding the eyes of his charge. Doing-giving-instruction sees personalised techniques employed to draw upon signifying *and* asignifying dimensions of both verbal and non-verbal communication. The non-verbal component of doing-giving advice guards against failure of the articulate content of an instruction. Instruction is not, however, reducible to the safe transit of a sovereign portion of knowledge. The vignette that opened this chapter noted Geoff questioning my ability to knock him out; leaning into my ear and whispering as much so as to 'push my buttons' and provoke my aggression. The different approaches taken by Donald, Gerry and Geoff, with different fighters, underscores the contingency of pedagogical relationships upon *personality*. If the abilities, pedagogies and personal transformations ongoing in Butterworth are to be valued as politically significant, then notions of progress cannot be restricted to the extension of liberal reason.

A *gap* lies between the trainer and the boxer. It stretches between the ability or knowledge the trainer intends to instigate, and the *emergence of capacity* in the boxer. A non-eliminable kernel of impossible concordance separates that intention and that ability. But the impossibility of *programming* a fighter conditions the possibility of *training* one. As noted above, a fighter cannot simply be the sum of his movements. It is both impossible and undesirable to precisely and finally determine the movements a boxer is capable of. A relationship of *trust* is established between trainer and boxer; they have confidence in one another. The trainer must cast his intention in the direction of the boxer and finally trust in his ability to make use of it in an appropriate manner. For his part, the boxer must follow the traces of intention that diffuse across the

pedagogical gap, a mysterious process contingent upon the intangibles that arise where characters strike up personal chemistry. Whilst Donald's presence excited my work rate, and Gerry's instruction put me at ease and inspired my confidence, Geoff's surliness stilled my sentiments and stirred a vague suspicion. Sparring similarly requires a relationship of confidence. As one partner manages his aggression he trusts that the other will do the same, establishing a shared assumption that enables a logic of interaction. As such, when Hamid and Tank spar, they learn to trust one another, which is remarkable in a town deeply affected by intercultural suspicion.

Culturally ingrained pedagogies in Butterworth are not limited to relationships between trainers and boxers. Pedagogy also characterises social affiliations amongst the gym's membership. As such, pedagogy is broadly implicated in the subtle operation of race on the gym-floor. Boxers observe one another in order to pick up guidance for their own mapping of capacities. They take time to watch their contemporaries and often exchange tips; one of the few instances in which the surly, independent masculinity of the gym unfolds into conversation. Whilst the rules of giving advice are bound up in the gym's hierarchy, fresh perspective on technique is highly valued. As such, pedagogies spread a complicated web of tacit assumption and affiliation through the gym. Where interactions take place between young Asian and white men, these individuals are not learning to better communicate by negotiating cultural difference. Raced differences are reportably ignored where Asian and white fighters exchange guidance. These men are preoccupied with the immediate task of learning to box as they navigate the irrepressible threat of misunderstanding an instruction and meeting an embarrassing mistake. Where young white and Asian men learn to box together, they learn to get along with one another within a social context maintained by a culturally located rationale for interaction, whereas rationales for intercultural cooperation are so often contradicted by the raced segregation and suspicions abroad in Burnley. As indicated above, there is a risk that these men may not get along, just as there is a possibility that they will

not learn to box well. Antagonism might still take up familiar raced refrains, as Butterworth is in no way removed from Burnley. Yet *the pedagogical architecture of the gym's boxing culture is carefully designed to draw young men into intuitively cooperative affiliations*, such as sparring, through which their abilities and personalities come into positive contact.

The management of the transversal quality of personal transformation is necessary for the maintenance of an inspired social order made navigable by reportable practice, gym etiquette and an authorised masculinity. A slippage in the gap between the articulable purpose and the tangible effect of pedagogy sees unplanned for mess accumulate, and so purpose must be recuperated. As knuckles are bruised, punching technique changes to alleviate stress on the hand. Where a boxer loses control of his anger during sparring, he is taken to one side to calm down. When Max prematurely attempted to add his name to the gym wall, he was disciplined. Although the fallout from such instances is a diffuse departure from the regimented practices of doing-learning-boxing, the purpose of learning to box is posthumously recuperated. The recuperation of purpose after the passing of an unexpected event is a dynamic evident throughout the varied pedagogies by which young men learn to box and socialise in Butterworth. Recuperation may come through reportably doing-showing-respect, altering fighting technique or more intimate shifts in disposition. These relationships elaborate a rationale and context for intercultural interaction in Burnley. Understanding Butterworth's political significance will require appreciation of the affective dynamism, the varied abilities and the complex, culturally ingrained pedagogies located in the gym.

4. Inspirational infrastructure and competitive individualism

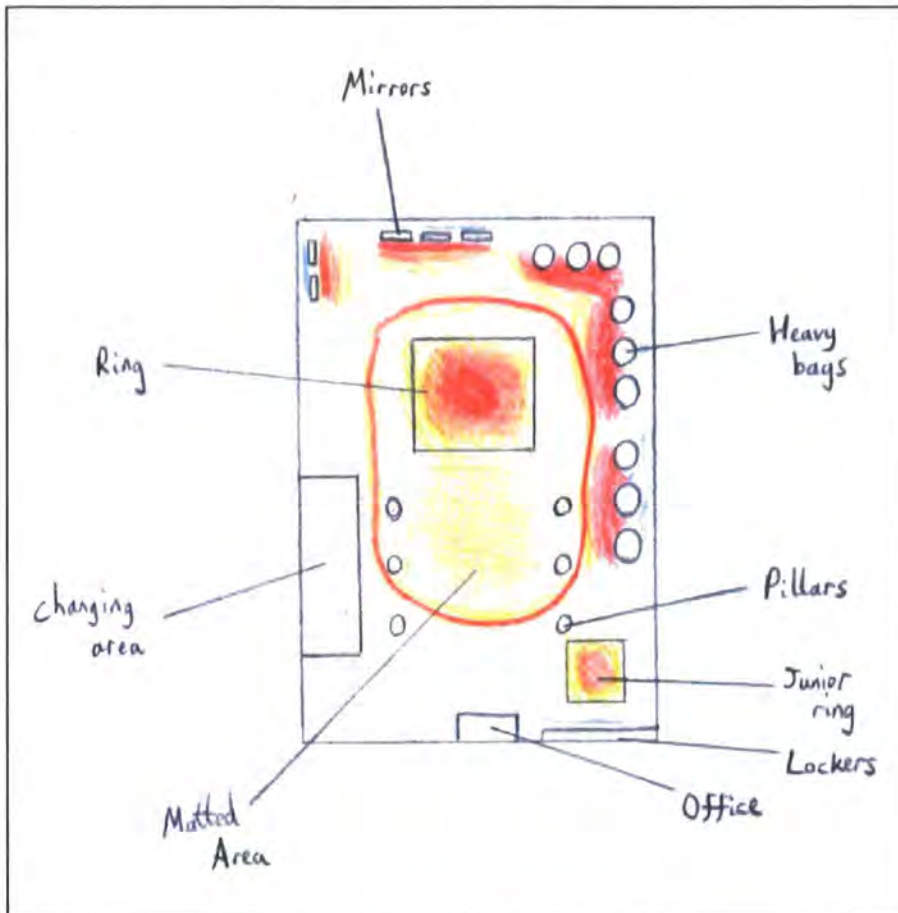
Butterworth ABC is carefully engineered to be an inspirational place. The pedagogical techniques that add up on the gym-floor are enabled within an *inspirational infrastructure* that coheres a venue capable of sustaining a boxing culture. Within that infrastructure, the gym is designed to enable boxers to

develop capacities requisite to the pursuit of the appropriate personal transformations. The charisma of Donald, Gerry and Geoff charges the gym-floor with a vigour that is supported by a cast of personalities, representations and materials. Moreover, the marking of gym hierarchy by deference and respect, along with the pervasive presence of pedagogy, means that numerous older role models are available for young fighters. It would be possible to generate a familiar account of the gym-floor as a venue for the exercise of discipline via a normative masculinity, or else to diagnose the recuperation of endangered masculinities. Chapter 1, however, set out the commitment of this thesis to engendering a more positive account of youth culture. As such, by assuming a view of power as the cultivation of affective capacities inspiration may be thought of as *motivation-in-motion*. Furthermore, the endogenous logic of interaction that enables intercultural affiliations is predicated upon the flow of inspiration through the gym-floor.

On first sight, the achievement of inspired social order in the gym appears spontaneous, seamless and timeless. But with experience, it becomes apparent that the gym's management team continually work to forge an inspiring place from disparate personalities, parts and pasts. Artwork, trophies, newspaper cuttings and posters promoting local matches are displayed on the walls. Inspirational slogans hang from the ceiling and are prominently positioned in the changing room. Butterworth has an architecture of intensity. Zones that enable intense inhabitations of space are mapped across the gym-floor by this inspirational infrastructure. For fighters to become furiously engaged in engrossing physical activity requires their careful physical and affective positioning relative to other bodies, personalities, equipment, etc. As such, zones of intensity are distributed around the gym; alongside the heavy bags, in front of the mirrors, in the middle of the ring and on the route taken during circuit training. Conversely, the changing area and Donald's office are relatively calm. These places are suited to very different practices that are nonetheless

implicated in the achievement of inspired social order; wrapping hands, getting changed, drinking water, chatting with parents or regional promoters, etc.

Figure 7. Mapping intensities in Butterworth ABC



Despite the skilled composition of the gym as such, the summoning of aggression and the tempering of emotion therein is not inevitable, as though the pressing incipience of inspiration will naturally and suitably flow from regular associations of flesh and leather. Inspiration is an ongoing achievement of an irreducibly complex culture composed of singular associations of personality, representation and matter. Rather than flowing from an identifiable cause to set a predictable result in trammled motion, inspiration arcanelly emerges from and settles upon a maelstrom of activity. It is often reported through colloquialisms that grasp at its ineffable nature; being in 'the zone', or having 'it'. I came to know the quality of feeling that enervates the limbs and mind when

concentration and aggression reach a crescendo in concert with one another. Deeply involving experiences of cultural practice, such as working the pads or sparring, might be inspired where one is shouted at by Geoff, where one is aware of Donald's sheer presence as he prowls through the heavy bags, or when reeling from a clean shot to the head. These events, along with perhaps more subtle happenings that do not breach the threshold of reportability, provide the often elusive biting point where inspiration drives the body to new feats. One evening, as two seniors sparred, a lacklustre performance by Tank was transformed after he was hit cleanly and painfully on the ear; his face contorted as he pressed forward, punching harder, more rapidly, forcing Sid into a corner, to cover and to slip the punches as best he could. The look on Sid's face was revealing, as anxiety leaked through his otherwise inscrutable mask of concentration. Sid recognised the effect of his punch and was apprehensive of the effort it inspired in Tank; an apprehension he had to temper if he were not to panic, lose technique and take more punishment. Unable to feed off the intensity and turn it to his advantage, he opted to 'ride it out', moving with the force of the punches and avoiding a shot from which he could not recover.

Race is reportably written out of the engineering of Butterworth's inspirational infrastructure. No particular efforts are made to provide specific points of access to the gym's inspirational culture on the basis of young men being white or Asian. A reportably colour-blind approach is practised through a focus upon what young bodies can do, *other* than bear raced significances. This is notable in a town where valuations of personal ability and worth are too often bound to pigmentation. As set out above, mention of raced difference is strictly taboo when within the heavy white doors of the gym. Anyone who is capable of training and fighting, seriously and respectfully, may share in its future. Its inspirational infrastructure does not obey a raced dynamic; there are not separate arrays of people, things and representations designed to inspire white men and Asian men, respectively. It is possible that young Asian fighters are more likely to be inspired by the framed pictures of Nazeem Hamed. Indeed,

young Asians fighting on the regional boxing circuit are markedly more likely to mimic his fluid, unorthodox style. Moreover, zones of intensity may be intimidating rather than inspiring, potentially allowing race to be mapped onto them; 'those white guys don't seem very approachable'. Just as inspiration does not inevitably emerge, nor does it inevitably unfold a deracialising logic of affiliation. Sometimes, however, it does.

Inspiration makes possible the articulable purpose of the gym's organisation, which is the production of competitive boxers capable of winning fights and trophies at regional and national competitions. A fighter who reveals aptitude and demonstrates the appropriate attitudes can expect to find himself boxing competitively for the club. Butterworth's competitive boxers have specific training programmes, attend the gym earlier in the evening, train for longer and get more attention from the coaches. They are involved in exclusive rituals such as writing their names on the wall by the changing area and are invited to the seated dinners at boxing shows. The gym's meritocratic culture is not, however, entirely intolerant of incapacity; it would be hard to imagine a boxing club thriving, as an inspirational venue or indeed financially, by only catering for the most able. A fighter called Stefan started training as I did. Over the months, I watched his sparring become more aggressive and technically competent. He spoke more as his confidence grew. In May, we discussed how excited he was to be competing for the first time that summer. My own progress never qualified me for consideration as a club boxer. Indeed, relatively few fighters are considered eligible for the upper echelons of the gym's hierarchy. Those who are must serve a long apprenticeship. However, individuals may, by dint of personality and appropriate behaviour, carve out niches in the gym's hierarchy wherein advances in ability may be made and significant personal transformations undergone. I had to be excluded from the training of competitive fighters because I did not meet the required standard. The gym's masculine ethos of independence and hard work did, however, provide me with a map by which I could find my own place in the order of things. A natural

occasioning of social order emerges. A meaningful structure and practice of social authority evolves that *discriminates between more and less able bodies*, excluding them from certain activities and roles but also accommodating their invention of others.

Butterworth ABC is a meritocratic, elitist culture. Despite the cooperative achievement of inspired social order, club-mates are not team-mates. Butterworth remains a venue for personal development in an individualistic sporting culture. Competition between individuals is carried out, more and less formally and explicitly, within and beyond the gym. This competition may be against opponents at regional boxing shows, or else carefully managed during sparring. Subtle competitions also arise between fighters shadow boxing or skipping beside one another in the gym. But the staging of competitive individualism strictly disregards raced difference. *The reportability of race is suppressed so as its antagonisms may not derail the achievement of inspired social order.* Race is not *reportably* used as means of discriminating between and sorting human bodies. It would be naïve to immediately take claims to meritocracy at face value in a gym overwhelmingly used by white men and set within a town with a contentious racial politics. Raced significances brought into the gym by pigmentation may cling to and define contours of social affiliation amidst the messy fringes of inspired social order; where a group of friends anxiously stick together, buffeted by the intense atmosphere; or when pride is wounded by another boxer demonstrating superior ability. However, the suppression of the imaginative props of raced separatism in Burnley is fundamental to the maintenance of an infrastructure designed to inspire and develop latent physical potential. Race is subjugated to the club's function as an inspiring cultural venue capable of producing competitive, talented boxers.

A regime of discrimination militates against race assuming the divisive reportability it does elsewhere in Burnley, enabling a logic of interaction that connects bodies and personalities across the town's colour-culture line. The

personalities, rules, attitudes, hierarchy, pedagogies and inspiration that this chapter has characterised Butterworth through, add up to a particular achievement of cultural *ethos*. An ethos of *competitive individualism* convenes gym members in a manner apposite to the personal transformations pursued therein. If the intercultural affiliations achieved in Butterworth are to inform the ascription of political capacity to young white men, room must be made for this ethos within visions of Burnley's future. As suggested in Chapter 3, thought on Burnley's racial politics should not allow an ethos of plurality to occlude a plurality of ethos.

Chapter 6

Curzon Gym

'Power without control is nothing'

Sign on the wall of Curzon Gym, above the incline chest press machine.

'Bodybuilding is not an intellectual exercise, but you have to be intelligent to be a good bodybuilder'

Arnold Schwarzenegger, The Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding (1980)

1. Curzon gym

1.1 23rd January, 2006

I had been training at Curzon for three weeks on this wet evening, when I made my usual way through the Charter Walk Shopping Centre in town to spend the night lifting weights. The rigid soreness that spread around my elbows and across my chest had prevented me from going to Butterworth ABC just yet. I made my way past the shuttered shops in the failing light and pressed on through a wide retail park, turning the corner and passing the garages near the train line. The tatty wooden doorway came into view, tucked away at the bottom of a vast expanse of brick wall that reaches up the side of a former mill. Curzon Gym is two floors above the road level. In the wintry Burnley January, all the windows are closed tight and Gav's fire escape veranda is empty. The only clue as to what goes on in the mill is the faint clanging of metal from above and a small sign set in the window at the foot of the stairs:

The Bodybuilders

My calves and thighs were still sore right down to the bone from my last leg session on Friday. Cramps cinched into my quadriceps as I made my way around the last corner of the winding stairs, which turn back on themselves

three times as they climb into the roof of the mill. Already, I could tell that the gym had yet to get busy that evening. The radio was tuned to TBR (Two Borough Radio). The local news was on; measured tones, serious talk, no rhythm. The odd word became hidden behind an occasional clash of plates being loaded and the repetitive thud of a weight column dropping in its bracket. Ahead of me, Gav sat behind his office desk reading a book called 'Capital Punishment'. We exchanged brief greetings and I walked purposefully onto the gym-floor, dividing my concentration between training hard and getting some research done.

The gym looked more orderly than it often did. Gav or Barry must have done some tidying over the weekend. Most of the plates were threaded onto their stands and the dumbbells rested on their racks in neat rows, although already a few of them lay idle, some upended, estranged from their partners and scattered here and there around the free weights area. A handful of bodies milled around, prowling and scowling deeper in the gym. Geoff and Darren were training together as usual. Geoff's body was crammed into the hack squat, which threatened to fold him like an accordion. Darren stood beside him, hands on hips, breathing heavily, rhythmically, intently watching Geoff's every move. Behind the forest of machines arranged around the edges of the gym were two or three men I had not seen before.

The traffic news came on the radio as I rubbed chalk into my hands and grabbed a strut of a heavy piece of equipment, stretching my back until I felt the bottom of the lats tugging uncomfortably at my hips. Geoff finished his set and hauled himself gingerly out of the hack squat, grasping the frame of the machine whilst standing awkwardly on shaking legs, red faced and struggling for breath. As the intensity slowly released its grip on his features and his face began to relax (opening mouth wide, raising eyebrows high to get some feeling back) he called out across the gym; "put some music on Gav, it's like a dentist's waiting room in here". Gav looked up from his book, grinning widely; "look,

whose fucking radio is it?”. This prompted hearty laughter from both of them, a raucous laughter that diffused to the margins of the gym, jerking small self-conscious smiles and downward glances from the onlookers tucked away behind equipment. Gav stretched long and loud, lazily showing all his teeth. He returned the radio to find some dance music. The atmosphere picked up. Heavy beats. Repetitive melody. Cycling lyrics. A pop song, diluted into its signature refrains, passed through innumerable key changes and increases in tempo. An infectious energy moved through my ears, into my body and down into the bar I fasten my grip around.

I was half way through my work out, engrossed in effort and my back engorged with blood, when Gav's training partners started arriving. The first to appear at the top of the stairs was Shane. Shane is 18 years old and tremendously built. He is Gav's protégé. In my first weeks in the gym I found him to be friendly, if not overly talkative. He was followed by Barry, a round and powerful former power-lifter. Barry is withdrawn and has a serious demeanour, although he is meticulously polite. Shane and Barry stood at the office chatting to Gav for about ten minutes, after which time Gareth and Tom emerged at the top of the stairs. At six foot seven and a muscular twenty one stone, Gareth contrasts sharply with Tom's flabby five foot six. Gareth, talkative and engaging, is the only currently active competitive bodybuilder at Curzon. As such he is a source of attention and a focus of energy in the gym. Tom is much less physically striking, although his wit, which is loud, crude and hilarious in equal measures, is at the centre of much of the banter. On their arrival, Gav suddenly stood. He picked up his weight lifting belt and strode purposefully into the gym, weaving his way through the maze of machinery and large metal plates. People followed him. Someone turned the music up.

Gav, Barry and Shane picked their way through to the free weights area, a heavily matted clearing cordoned by racks of dumbbells amidst the crowding of equipment. They set up a bench and started pushing out some bench flies; lying

flat on their back and stretching their chest muscles by lowering dumbbells to the floor, before bringing them back up with a forceful exhalation that sent mist shooting from their open mouths into the cold air. Shane began his set, driving the dumbbells through the arc of motion confidently, energetically and with exemplary control. Gav and Barry barked encouragement. Shane's face reddened and his body trembled with the effort of forcing out repetitions, more and more so as his arms began to grind to a halt. Gav shouted "push it Shane-o" whilst Barry squatted on his hams, getting ready to catch the weight in case Shane dropped it and it should go crashing through the gym. Gav and Barry finally took the dumbbells from Shane's hands as he grunted with frustration and exhaustion at reaching the limit of what his body was capable of. When it came to Gav's turn, they moved onto the cables in the middle of the gym,⁶¹ filling centre stage with huge bodies, loud noise and engrossed intensity. Meanwhile, Gareth and Tom were training their backs and had begun with wide grip lateral pull downs. Gareth loaded up the entire weight stack and began furiously, effortlessly punching out a series of repetitions. The plates clattered noisily at the bottom of each rep, prompting Gav to shout "don't fucking break it" to general laughter. Kris arrived and started his familiar wind up routine on Geoff; "Did you go out last night?... Did you get laid?... Did you get your leg over?... One or both?"

Gav and his training partners had strikingly shifted the atmosphere, as they did most evenings at the gym. Those five large, strong white men are very much the leading figures in Curzon. When they start training, the gym-floor suddenly becomes alive with the sights, sounds and smells of weight lifting; clanging plates, grunts of exertion, powerful breathing, loud banter, body odour. The gym members I did not recognise seemed to shrink even further into the corners, lost behind the mutual inducement and excitement of metal and flesh. They occasionally peered out at Gav and his clique powerfully going about their

⁶¹ Gav would later explain to me that part of his chest muscle had become damaged and no longer worked, and so if he holds a dumbbell straight ahead of him his arm collapses.

business, or meekly smiled at the hearty laughter shared by these men as intensities exploded in the middle of the gym. They seemed to gravitate around this intensity, at once attracted and repelled; held in orbit. Gav and his clique continued to force every possible repetition out of their bodies. To wring out every last drop of energy and strain every unrecruited sinew they might bend to their will. Yet their expert, fine technical control of the weights was not lost amidst the temperate summoning of awe inspiring intensity. As Gareth reached failure on a set of lat pull downs, Tom shifted the weight key further up the stack of plates, allowing his partner to keep lifting through the exhaustion.⁶² Shane stood over Barry as he blasted through a set of repetitions on the bench press, holding the middle of the bar with his thumb and index finger to apply the small amounts of leverage that would help Barry to reach deeper into his muscle fibres and to tap into his latent potential for muscular growth.⁶³ Once they had finished their own workout, Geoff and Darren continued to encourage Gav; “come on Gav, light weight... you’re fucking flying tonight mate... give me another one...”. Gareth closely watched the movements of Shane’s body as he performed forward dumbbell laterals. Shane studied these same movements, his eyes fixed upon his reflection in the mirror. As he regulated his form his face contorted and fixed in exertion and concentration; “come on Shane, shoulders like boulders”.

The injection of intensity and shift in gravity that Gav and his training partners supply has a thoroughgoing fallout in the gym. Gav and his partners cultivate an atmosphere conducive to the training effect they desire. They effectively reterritorialise the gym-floor with their presence. Yet there are also regions at the margins of this atmosphere where the inspiration of these men becomes intimidating for others. Unplanned for spaces where the intensity generated flat-lines. Where their inspiration effects alienation and their affective energies define regions and bodies that may be called *disaffected*, but in a specific and

⁶² A technique called a ‘drop set’ or a ‘strip set’.

⁶³ A technique called ‘forced reps’.

complicated sense, not a generic one as criticised by this thesis. These disaffected spaces are sheltered from the infectious nature of the energies alive in the gym. Intensity fails to animate bodies, making them tense instead. Terse. Rigid. Here and there people become bad method actors, disingenuously stringing together a series of gestures. Simulative effects of inspiration cross the surface of their bodies in the form of small smiles and self-conscious grunts of exertion. Something seemed to be missing in the demure curling of lips by the marginal spectators to the banter Gav shared with his partners. Something missing in the hesitant movements they made as they went between machines. A confidence lacking in their eyes, which furtively flitted back toward these outrageous characters and their improbable dimensions and movements. They remained incapable of receiving a fillip of intensity from the feats underway in the centre of the room. Incapacity enveloped their bodies as they were rendered immune to the otherwise infectious humour emanating from those powerful bodies and personas.

On this night, as on others, I witnessed numerous examples of cooperation between men training in the gym. Whilst Gav and his training partners are very much the central figures in Curzon, they do not throw their weight around. They do not tell others what they can or cannot do, nor belittle anyone and seek to put them in their place. When they reterritorialise the gym, it is by the force of their personalities and the waves of intensity emanating from their training, rather than by a commandeering of equipment or confrontational behaviour. If they want to use a piece of equipment, they are sure to ask anyone standing near it if they are already using it themselves, whether that other person is a shy newcomer or a confident regular. They carefully observe gym etiquette, ensuring that amidst the aggression of their work, intensity does not spill over into an ignorance of the presence of other gym users. Shane often helped me to load plates onto a barbell without my needing to ask, choosing to use his own rest time to help me get on with my workout. Members sharing the gym-floor at Curzon take enormous care not to get in each others' way. They often wait

patiently for people to finish lifting before they walk past them, for fear of putting them off, or else quickly apologise where the restricted gym-floor causes them get in one another's way. The gentle, soft spoken character of these men, although variedly mixed in with boorish banter and aggressive training, is strongly at odds with the uncomplicated and noisome masculinity implied by caricatures of jobs or hooligans.

By seven thirty on this particular evening, Gav and his partners had wound their workouts down. Geoff and Darren had already left by this stage, noisily joking and saying goodnight as they disappeared down the stairs. The remaining men had since left as well, although a further group of three arrived with whom I was familiar. These men, now with the gym-floor to themselves but for my presence, took to the cross cables in the centre of the gym. Noisy banter was swapped with Tom and Shane, filling the room with their conversation and laughter. Meanwhile an older Asian man, perhaps in his forties, came in and started training at the front of the gym. He was the first Asian man to come into Curzon that evening and had brought his young son with him, who sat impassively on the incline sit up board, stony faced and disinterested as his father modestly set about using a chest press machine. Soon after his arrival, Shane, Gareth and Tom went home, leaving only Barry and Gav at the office at the top of the stairs. Gav kicked his chair back, rested his feet on the counter and began to chat easily with Barry.

A clattering of feet reverberated up the long stairwell and into the gym. Gav got to his feet sharply, if a little awkwardly, and peered over the counter in search of the noisy newcomers. He took up a loud and good natured exchange with the arrivals as they trampled up the last flight of stairs and burst into the gym. Joe, a young and powerfully built Asian man, shared a warm handshake and greeting with a beaming Gav. Barry took a step back as an inscrutable smile appeared on his face. Joe was followed by a half a dozen more young Asian men, one of whom bounded straight into the gym -past Gav without any recognition- to

share a kiss on either cheek with the Asian man who had arrived earlier. This man's young son now came to life and grinned broadly, infectiously. He suddenly became the centre of attention as the young Asian men scuffed his hair and chatted with him. Gav checked that Joe had his set of keys before he said goodnight and he and Barry made their way down the stairs.

For the first half of the evening, Curzon had lived up to its local reputation as a white gym and seemed to express the parallel lives Cantle worries for. However, there were now a few more shades of flesh present and the operation of race on the gym-floor became more conspicuous. The newcomers effected a second reterritorialisation of the gym that night, following that instigated by Gav and his partners. This reflected the common pattern of evenings at Curzon. The half hour between half past seven and eight o'clock saw a change in the characters that populated the gym and a pronounced shift in atmosphere. The radio station changed from the dance tracks I was so familiar with, to 'Bangla music', with which I was not. Also, the room suddenly filled with a different language. The man who had brought his son to the gym became much more gregarious and seemed to fill more space, speaking loudly and walking with confidence. His son became animated and playful. Just as strikingly, the three white men who were noisily bantering with Gav across the length of the gym-floor fell quiet; almost imperceptibly they had become huddled behind the Smith machine in the far corner of the gym, their gazes seeming as restricted as their bodies were confined. Their confidence stilled. Their intensity dropped. They trained in a much more constrained manner, seemingly going through the motions and struggling to gather their former aggression. The centre of charismatic gravity in the gym had shifted as new significances, possibilities and risks appeared. This chapter considers the significance of the micro-geography of race that operates through Curzon's distinctive masculine body culture.

2. Organising the gym-floor

2.1 Gym etiquette

Curzon gym appears utterly chaotic on first sight. At the top of the stairs, fixed upon the front of the office, is a prominently displayed sign that reads; "You train here at your own risk. The gym accepts no responsibility for accidents". Turning left, the stairs open into a wide, high room, disclosing the majority of the gym down a deep and bustling space. The floor is matted with thick rubber pads. It is densely crowded with apparatus. Imposing metal machines huddle together, establishing a warren of spaces through which large, heavy men delicately pick their way. I gained more than a few scars on my shins during my period of learning to negotiate this maze of steel frames and sharp edges. A second room, much smaller and less frequently used, is tucked away through a door in the corner directly above the stairwell. It resembles a building site, as Gav is (perpetually, it seems) in the process of refurbishing it and buying new cardio equipment. Throughout the gym the windows are unclean and the walls, once white, are cut and scarred by traces of collisions with plates and bars. These now contribute to the atmosphere; rough around the edges, a place to get on with some hard work. Any spare wall space is covered in mirrors, adding the illusion of infinite depth to the forest of metal, steel cable and flesh. At first, it was a mystery to me how a space so crowded by so various a range of things could achieve order. This confusion was comparable to my befuddlement at the swirl of movement and sound I fought to make sense of at Butterworth. The chaotic edge of novel experience here was of a slower tempo, although this perhaps only made it more difficult for me to find my bearings and slip into a rhythm. This chapter illustrates that the mechanical complexity of the gym-floor in Curzon enables a massive range of motile, sensate and affectual capacities. This complexity supports a vast variety in the regimes of personal cultivation that men pursue.

This complicated coming together of bodies, objects, ideas and energies is managed through a code of *gym etiquette*. Gym etiquette at Curzon is less

formally enforced than at Butterworth. The authority held at Curzon by Gav and his training partners is less readily understood in terms of roles such as 'trainer' or 'club boxer'. The pedagogical relationships through which members learn how to reportably do-getting-on-in-the-gym are typically ad hoc arrangements, formed on a mutual basis. The apparently formally enforced features of gym etiquette are often ignored. One example is the sign that orders the return of dumbbells to their racks after use. Etiquette in Curzon is structured by a series of collectively achieved, unspoken background expectations, rather than through explicit instructions, advice or signage. It is expected that gym members will do what they can to help one another complete their training. In my first few weeks at the gym, it became apparent to me that as a gym member takes their rest between exercises, they will often help another member load plates onto bars. They shout encouragement to one another during a set of exercises, and sometimes help one another to perform one or two extra repetitions by judiciously applying a little pressure in assistance. This is one technique that requires the helper to be particularly gym-savvy. He must be capable of applying the correct amount of assistance by *anticipating* the effort the lifter is capable of. One evening I saw a gym member pull a barbell off another's chest as he began to struggle with a bench press; far too quickly for the lifter, who rode the intensity of his effort to barrack his impromptu assistant. Members will typically give one another enough space to perform the exercises they are engaged in. In such a cramped venue, the range of motion required by exercises can temporarily close off routes between machines, requiring a little patience and caution from all involved.

The maintenance of gym etiquette rarely requires the explicit application of reportable sanctions. Failures to adhere to the requirements of etiquette do not cause a catastrophic break down in order and do not, therefore, require a pointed reassertion of sense. Gym etiquette is maintained by essentially unspoken assumptions of behaviour. The organically achieved conventions that gym members rely upon must be learnt through observation over an extended

period of time, as subtle clues are progressively picked up on. This gradual acculturation may be contrasted to Butterworth, where reportable infractions of etiquette were more frequent and were likely to provoke laughter, witty put downs or unambiguous disciplining from the management-senior fighter hierarchy. At Curzon, the authority of senior gym members is of a different nature. The 'old-hands' at Curzon will typically go out of their way to help new gym members, offering advice and encouragement to promote good technique and provoke training intensity. On the part of the experienced gym members, volunteering advice requires the skill of being able to pick up on reportable signs of a lack of gym experience. A common element of gaining a reputation as an experienced bodybuilder is that of gaining an attunement to the uncertainties and technical naiveties of newcomers. The exchange of particular pieces of advice, regarding lifting technique, nutrition or perhaps contest preparation, is a major social and pedagogical feature in Curzon. The achievement of such relationships is by no means the inevitable conclusion of coming to train at Curzon. It requires that the newcomer demonstrate a serious training attitude, attend regularly and train intensely.

Knowledge and experience of using the array of distinctive pieces of equipment available on the gym-floor provides a rich resource for conversational prompts. My own relationships with other gym members often began with inquiries about the function of this or that piece of equipment, and about the effect it is capable of stimulating in the body. I came to know Darren and Geoff after talking with them about how to use the leg press machine. The long rest periods taken between sets (often between one and three minutes) result in men standing around, waiting for their muscles to recover sufficiently before they can perform the next series of lifts. Bodybuilding training therefore mixes intense, focused bursts of activity with the possibility of regular conversation between participants. As noted in the vignette that opened this chapter, for most of the evening the gym is used either by white or Asian men, with them sharing the floor mostly during the half hour period of transition. Yet where the gym-floor is

briefly shared across Burnley's colour-culture line, particularly in the half hour from seven thirty to eight o'clock, *gym etiquette may provide a tentative mapping of interaction between white and Asian men* who otherwise mostly maintain a mutual distance. As noted in Butterworth, the mutual navigation of etiquette establishes a culturally located rationale for interaction, and potentially for intercultural interaction. I came to know Joe through an impromptu discussion about how to lean forward when performing dips, in order to shift the stress from the triceps onto the chest. The fragility and ongoing achievement of gym etiquette should, however, underscore that it is not inevitable that such forms of affiliation will take root. As discussed in Chapter 5 and illustrated below, failures in gym etiquette may prompt affects of embarrassment or anger that offer race a divisive foothold.

Similarly as in Butterworth, conversations about training punctuate rather than characterise the gym-floor. Doing-maintaining-civil-inattention is a skill related to the long rest periods taken between sets of exercises. Whilst the breaks in intensity provide opportunities for conversation, bodybuilders also develop distinctive means of occupying themselves otherwise; of appearing too busy and engaged with their training to talk. Malcolm, an ageing former amateur bodybuilder, typically gazes out of the windows across the Burnley skyline. Dennis, a familiar though less frequent attendee, stares into his own eyes in the tall mirrors, bouncing up and down on his toes. There is also often plenty going on in Curzon that may occupy members without their attention seeming out of place. When Gav and his clique work out, the gym fills with noise and energy. It is common for other gym members to stop and watch. When experienced bodybuilders are training, watching them takes on a pedagogical dimension. It is not thought of as out of place so long as it is carried out with sufficient discretion and in a non-intrusive manner. Reportably doing-maintaining-civil-inattention, whilst ostensibly resting-doing-nothing, is an important element of being gym-savvy in Curzon. It is something that newcomers conspicuously lack, particularly if Curzon is the first bodybuilding gym they have attended. One

young Asian man, called Yusef, started training in Curzon in early February. Notably, he came to train in the gym earlier in the evening, when very few Asian men did. At first he was visibly uncertain, flitting between pieces of equipment seemingly with the primary purpose of not getting in anyone's way. He would tend to stand a little too close for *comfort* and watch other gym members a little more intently than seemed *appropriate*. Over subsequent months, however, he developed his own method of doing-maintaining-civil-inattention; gazing blankly forward, remaining seated on the machine he was using whilst taking his rest.

One evening in March, Gav was amidst an intense workout with Barry and Shane. They stood to one side as Gav settled his frame into position and prepared his body and mind for an intense set of barbell shrugs. Two men, rather conspicuous as newcomers, entered the gym and uncertainly picked their way across the floor. As Gav arranged his game face and tensed his body in preparation, they awkwardly interrupted him to ask about membership costs. Gav's face relaxed, but then creased deeply in irritation; "I'll deal with ye when I'm done here". This event might be contrasted with the tours of the gym and plentiful advice that other newcomers, such as myself, received having caught Gav at a better time. Another, infrequent attendee had a habit of training with no shirt on. As in Butterworth, this is considered inappropriate. Each time he lifted a weight he screamed loudly, feigning the same level of intensity from the first repetition to the last, seemingly more concerned with mimicking the effects of muscular failure than with reaching it. Despite regularly trying to engage the old hands in the gym in conversation, he was repeatedly ignored. Those young men who interrupted Gav spoke in broken English with Eastern European accents. Furthermore, the man who trained with no shirt on was Asian. It would be crude to construe an explanation for how gym members reacted to them on this basis. However, in moments such as these where gym etiquette is broken and social affiliation stalls, a poisonous ambiguity is injected by Burnley's racial politics. The town's raced segregations might assert themselves in the gym where the flow of etiquette stutters across the colour-culture line, tempting the

hasty explanation; '*they don't know how this place works*'. So whilst gym etiquette may provide a rationale for intercultural interaction, that rationale provides no guarantee of intercultural affiliation.

2.2 Humour and pride

As in Butterworth ABC, the achievement of an organised gym-floor at Curzon involves the instigation and temperance of a variety of affects. Chapter 5 illustrated the implication of affectively charged capacities in the reportable exhibition of skills and attitudes crucial to doing-getting-on-in-the-gym. The themes of becoming gym-savvy, respectful and serious are reprised at Curzon. Although there are striking similarities as such, these skills and attitudes are located, contingent achievements manifest in subtly different ways in each gym. Rather than rehearse a similar set of arguments, so as to precisely characterise and so distinguish the achievement of doing-getting-on-in-the-gym in Curzon, better insight may be gained by focusing upon two affectively charged skills that are of particular significance. The ability to engage in *banter* is highly valued on the gym-floor and is close to the heart of the male behaviours on display. In turn, an ability to *save face* is also significant, whether one is tempering pride or managing a reputation. Below, I characterise banter and saving face as affectively imbued social skills, employed in recuperation of reportable meaning and settled feeling after unplanned for happenings.

Humour provides vital energy to Curzon, where many of the gym members loudly share a distinctive sense of humour. Humour plays a formative role in the social affiliations that cohere the gym as a durable cultural venue. Being able to banter by engaging in witty and humorous exchanges is crucial to doing-getting-on-in-the-gym in Curzon. The preferred sense of humour is a very particular one. It is more subtle, skilled and varied than the often vulgar content might suggest. The banter typically has a fleshy theme that mixes in helpings of profane language. Loud belching might be followed by even louder qualifications, such as "better an empty house than a bad tenant", ironic cheers,

or attempts to recreate the tune on the radio. One evening, a member of the gym gave a colourful anecdote beginning with the removal of trousers at a party in order to display a full and powerful set of quadriceps, but ending with a loss of bladder control and mutual embarrassment. The physically disruptive consequences of steroid abuse also often provide a subject of humour. One evening, a senior member of the gym told an anecdote about being asked by a doctor whether he was on any medication; "I says 'how long have ye fucking got?!'" There also were humorously intoned conversations about the effects that taking androgenic substances has on genitals.

Male sexuality is another common theme of banter in the gym. One evening, Geoff and Darren spent time talking to me about the difficulties of staying motivated to continue training. We spoke about how hard it is to commit to regular workouts whilst holding a job down and resisting distractions such as fast food and late nights out drinking. Geoff concluded by reassuring me that bodybuilding was "good with the women", providing a quick thrust of the hips as an exclamation point. On another evening, Tom explained to me that he was willing to offer himself to Pauline Prescott; "I'd give her one, but she'd have to say thank you". In the early summer, Kris was standing by the window. He excitedly encouraged other gym members to come over and look into the street; "fucking hell look at that". The rush of bodies to the window was halted when Gareth shouted "he's only talking about a bloody car" to outbreaks of laughter and a playful chastising of Kris for making them think there was an attractive woman walking past. Gav was adamant that female bodybuilding is an extension of 'burning bras'. There were also tongue in cheek accusations of and claims to homosexuality. Tom was especially fond of sarcastically citing his own or other people's sexual preference for other men; for instance, calling out "it's a gay thing" when holding Gareth's huge body still to allow him to perform hanging leg raises, and another time calling Gav gay for taking off his trousers and flexing his legs in front of the mirror (a regular event that invariably brought a large crowd).

Parody and irony are often deployed as comedic devices. Some evenings this involved mocking the repetitive and formulaic content of dance music, as Shane often did by caricaturing 'beat boxing' and ludicrously swaying his arms in the air. Gym members would turn such moments to rib one another. Gav's dance moves, broken out of a Saturday night in Burnley, are a regular target for Shane and Gareth. One evening Gav rose to his own defense by taking to the gym-floor himself, giving us a real taste of his skills. Self deprecating, self aware and ironic devices enliven the humour in Curzon Gym. Talk in the work, but not about the work, also often involved intelligent, personal and reflective discussion on any number of subjects. Time spent with these men confounds casual stereotypes founded upon their occupations, leisure pursuits and white skin. The banter they share is saturated with references to a particular, fleshy masculinity that tallies with analyses of men playing out roles under threat in a town facing major cultural realignment. However, the gym's humour is also nuanced by the variety of personalities involved and by the complicated performances employed. After sharing a particularly boisterous evening with these men, generic notions of their disaffection and analyses of white men mired in nostalgia and anxiety seem remote. There is a lot of fun had in the gym that should not be exhaustively explained as consequent of social change or psychological comportment. It would perhaps be too seductive to see the humour in Curzon Gym as the caricature it appears to confirm, and thereby rehearse familiar analyses of anxious male body cultures. There is a subtlety to the humour of these men that may be appreciated where its substantive content is not allowed to obscure the social function it performs within inspirational culture.

Banter is a mechanism for developing friendships and forming affective bonds between gym members. It often leads to social meetings outside the gym, such as the burgeoning friendship between Gareth and Kris. Yet the unpredictable edge to events where characters interact establishes a capacity for banter to go wrong as well; for the inspiration of humorous affects to fall flat and insert a

discordance amidst otherwise 'good craic'. On one occasion I laughed at a renewed bout of mocking attention to Tom's height, to be greeted with "I don't know what he's laughing at". The right to banter with specific characters on certain subjects is bound up in the gym's web of social affiliation. Banter must be observed for initial guidance as to what are, and are not, safe subjects of humour at certain times and with certain people. Importantly, humorous exchanges take place between *characters*. There is an element of *chemistry* to interpersonal rapport. It seems it was inappropriate for me to laugh on this occasion. People are drawn to Gav as the owner of the gym and as a successful sportsman. But it is his charisma and ability to tell an anecdote with infectious humour that enlivens the bonds of affection people form with him. His negotiation of outbreaks of banter is crucial to the ongoing achievement of a vibrant gym-floor. Gav typically holds court at his office before and after his training sessions. The friendship he shares with Joe involves fast and witty exchanges, underscoring the possibility that *personal chemistry might traverse Burnley's colour-culture line*, and that the gym's humour often facilitates this where it occurs.

However, banter is also implicated in the particular reinvention of raced division seen in the tacit agreement whereby most Asians use the gym late at night. Learning how to negotiate humour, both by doing-banter and doing-being-ribbed, is a fundamental rite of passage to doing-getting-on-in-the-gym. This is the case both early in the evening and late at night, when white and Asian friendship groups train together, respectively. Although bodybuilding is an individualistic enterprise, banter is important in generating a collegiate atmosphere that coheres the gym as a social venue. Whilst gym members ensure that there is a serious training atmosphere by getting on with intense and engrossing exercises, there is also a playful dynamic to exchanges that enliven the gym. In this respect, *playful* banter and *serious* training mutually reinforce one another. The potentially contrary moods of being playful and being

serious are melded together by the mutually resonant, visceral energies they inspire.

However, the period between seven thirty and eight o'clock, when it is typically the case that Asian men are arriving and white men are leaving, can often be one of a marked transition in the gym's atmosphere. The switching of the radio station, Gav and his training partners leaving and the change of the personalities using the gym, can be sufficiently disruptive to mark a racially coded break in the achievement of the gym's atmosphere. Rather than a carefully managed handing over of the achievement of inspirational atmosphere, that atmosphere is taken apart and divisively reconstructed. Although still recognisable as a humour laden though serious training atmosphere, it bears renewed raced significances built into it. One evening, the new arrivals took equipment into the gym's second room and trained separately from the rest of the (white) gym membership. Whilst this was more than four months into my stay and I felt confident and assertive in the gym, I felt intimidated by the shift in atmosphere as I walked through the partition between rooms to find a dumbbell. Asian men and white men can become affectively estranged from one another, even though they are sharing the 'same' place. Conversely, where this transition period sees a well handled passing over of the achievement of inspirational social order, intercultural interactions often occur. Kris often enjoys a game of chase with the young Asian boy noted in the vignette that opened this chapter. It is not the case that through such interactions, race ceases to have any purchase upon imaginations and feelings. Rather, the gym's atmosphere of bonhomie has an infectious force that can draw bodies marked as racially different into affective contact, just as the stalling of that infectiousness may reassume divisive raced significance.

Through the mutually resonant energies of humour and serious training, unplanned for events may play out. Earlier chapters criticise mono-affective accounts of insecure men primordially driven to express their masculinity

through bodily augmentation. It would, however, also be a mischaracterisation to, in response, represent Curzon as a scene of inevitably and unproblematically infectious humour. There are moments where bodybuilders feel the need to *save face* in front of their peers. This typically involves reporting that one is capable with, or knowledgeable about, bodybuilding practice. Techniques are deployed so as to promote and maintain public reputations of capability, knowledge-of-the-work and past achievements. One evening, Geoff and Darren told me that they used to do dumbbell bench presses with 150 pounds in each hand, whilst Gary and Jeremy once spoke nostalgically about how much they could squat when they were younger. Other members were keen to demonstrate their belief in the importance of adhering to a strict lifting technique. Gav corrected my bench fly technique one evening, encouraging me to bend my arms more to transfer the stress from my elbow and shoulder joints onto my pectoral muscles. There were discussions about the past achievements of gym members. Malcolm once explained to Dennis how he had won the Mr. World title (although on questioning he revealed it was for a minor amateur federation) and talked with authority about the bodybuilding publications he had appeared on the cover of. He seemed keen to impress his past successes upon Dennis, who was in turn keen to hear what he had to say and also to show that he was impressed by it; wide eyed, egging him on, exclamations of awe (“wow... fucking hell...”).

Claims to ability, knowledge and achievement play a role in negotiations of the social arrangements in Curzon. Social capital is attached to the authority required to impart advice. On any number of occasions, senior bodybuilders in the gym give advice to less experienced members (see below). A new member must, however, serve a sort of apprenticeship to qualify for this advice, attending the gym regularly and being reportably serious about training. Neither Gav, nor anyone else in the gym, sees themselves as a personal trainer. These men will not simply impart advice to anyone who walks through the door. Yusef’s regular appearance, demonstrable hard work and increasingly strong

understanding of gym etiquette (he would, for example, be sure to help people near him to load weights onto their bar) qualified him to receive advice from Geoff and Darren, who were in turn qualified to give that advice by virtue of their physical size, abilities and length of tenure in the gym. Small exchanges of assistance and advice saw the gradual development of a friendship that led to them training together regularly, despite the inconvenience presented to Geoff and Darren, who, being much stronger than Yusef, had to unload and reload the majority of plates from the bar between each set. The relationship that grew between these three men is a compelling example of how the ordered sociality of the gym, composed by complex physical practice and tacit assumptions of behaviour, enables durable social affiliations. Despite the operation of a micro-geography of race in the gym that generally keeps Asian and white men apart, Yusef came to share affiliations with white contemporaries by training in the gym at its apparently most racially exclusive.

Generic notions of disaffection cannot appreciate the inspired affiliations that grow as the men in Curzon exchange advice, assistance and work out pedagogical relationships of authority and pupilage. The sheer presence of the old-hands is reportably inspiring. Three young, slightly built men in their early twenties began attending the gym in late April. Although they mostly spoke amongst themselves and otherwise interacted little with other gym members, they would noticeably pick up the intensity of their efforts when Gav and his clique moved near to them on the gym-floor. It seemed that they wanted to impress them. Their talk-in-the-work that was not talk-about-the-work fell quiet. Their faces set and flushed with colour in serious concentration. They seemed increasingly determined to push into the cramps that filled their muscles at the end of each set. On my part, when Gav was nearby and I failed on a repetition I expected to make, a surge of embarrassment prompted me to swear, or otherwise publicly report my surprise and disappointment at not being able to complete another rep. In this respect, Gav's influence in the gym is comparable to Donald's in Butterworth; the reputation bound up in his presence could

inspire greater affective capacities to summon aggression and damage muscle fibre, or else prompt embarrassment at one's incapacities. In each case, one must temper the affective surge and use it to augment one's training experience, fulfilling the Spinozist advice to refine emotion in a way that is useful, enjoyable and strengthening.

Reportable work is done to publicly manage and maintain banter and to diminish experiences and demonstrations of embarrassment. The narratives through which this is done often feature reference to particular identities or claims upon gym related abilities. These assimilate the affective dynamics of banter and embarrassment into a coherent storying of ability and motivation. Such a management of one's affective relations is more complicated than Cante's contrast between disaffection and self-esteem suggests. The sign on the bottom of the stairs outside the gym simply reads 'The Bodybuilders'; statement and justification in two words. Signs inside the gym pick up on this theme, using slogans such as 'Bodybuilders pump harder', placed beside a picture of a full, round and flexed biceps muscle. Gav has a particular claim upon the identity of being a bodybuilder by virtue of his competitive successes. Gareth similarly has a claim upon the identity that goes unquestioned, as he is the only competitive bodybuilder currently active in the gym. Shane holds a status as being 'one for the future'. Gav confided in me that he would be "ready for the Britain Juniors" by the time he was 21, and proudly noted that he has not had to use steroids to develop Shane to this point; "people always ask me, 'what have you got Shane on?', and I say nothing, it's his testosterone, he's a young lad". There are also more tenuous claims to the identity of 'bodybuilder' alive in the gym. For instance, powerfully built members whose physiques do not conform to the bodybuilding 'look' as they lack symmetry, proportion and definition. Barry is a former powerlifter, whose identification as such has a similar function in the gym to that of being a bodybuilder, denoting talent and achievement and begetting authority to be taken seriously and to give advice.

A further narrative of self worth employed in the gym is that of being a 'good working man'. The majority of the men who train at Curzon are involved in manual occupations. Gav works as a plumber during the day, Gareth as a scaffolder and Barry, Shane and Tom as construction workers. Other jobs held by the men at Curzon include club doorman and long distance lorry driver. Public identifications with a particular notion of being a working man are commonplace. One evening an item came onto the radio about 'white van man' being required to take an extra driving proficiency course. This was met by Darren humorously shouting "fuck off" and Geoff chipping in with "I haven't got bloody time". Early on another evening, at about half past five, I noted to Gav how quiet the gym was. He explained, rather abruptly, "we're all working men Rob, they're just finishing work off".

The masculinity valorised in Curzon Gym is a class inflected one. It is something that men training before and after the nightly transition period have in common; Joe and most of his friends work in the garages next door to the gym. However, the micro-geography of raced segregation operating in Curzon underscores that the gym-floor should not be seen simply as a case of class unity reconciling young men otherwise estranged by race. Whilst the arrangement that sees Asian men use the gym late at night is sometimes marked by a contentious shift in atmosphere, it more often sees the careful handing over of inspirational culture that entails intercultural encounters and gives rise to intercultural affiliations; as illustrated above (between Gav and Joe, and Gareth, Darren and Yusef) and discussed further below. Those affiliations are made possible by the play between this micro-segregation and a class coded masculinity. Yet the immediacy of these affiliations is marked by a temperance of banter, pride and reputation, rather than by a negotiation of cultural difference and commonality. Analyses that look to generic disaffection, parallel lives, anxious white masculinity or a celebration of diversity, will struggle to make sense of these arrangements.

3. Putting a physique together

3.1 Tissue awareness

As noted above, the conceptual dissection of bodily movements and their organisation into a coherent training programme is oriented by identifying the regions of muscular tissue that need to be developed. Gav often refers to training as sculpting; adding thickness to the medial deltoid to complement a thick chest, or perhaps tightening the obliques to accentuate the flair of the lats. Training is regularly interspersed by careful assessments of physique, from different angles, in the gym's many mirrors.⁶⁴ Sculpting a physique in this way requires a long term strategy and enormous commitment. Niko and his brother Primo are at a stage of their career when they need to simply gain as much muscle mass as quickly as possible. I spoke with them about the commitment required to eat every two hours and to take certain supplements at the correct time to 'maintain an anabolic environment' throughout the day. Barry once extolled to me the speed and convenience of simply putting a meal in a blender and drinking it. Gav used to keep a training diary when in competition, in which he recorded what he ate, how much he lifted, how he looked and how he felt. He carefully assessed his appearance in the mirror every night. His commitment to his sport, his art, has at times been at great personal cost to him. I was aware that there were growth promoting substances being taken that entail a risk of severe health problems. The commitment that the pursuit of extraordinary muscular development demands can render it a literally life consuming passion.

The extent of the dedication of many of the men using Curzon is such that it will frustrate attempts for concise and coherent explanation. The bodily experience of bodybuilding training is far removed from other experiences of having a body.

⁶⁴ Mirrors and video cameras are used to provide a third person perspective on technique. Whilst 'posing' is taboo at Butterworth, it is a common feature of life at Curzon. Between sets, gym members will strike competition poses and assess the results of their efforts. During my time training at the gym, the second room was fitted with a partitioned area. Mirrors were fixed to the three walls, allowing a more complete inspection of every aspect of one's physique. Gareth made use of this area to practice his posing routine in the lead up to the Mr Calder Valley competition.

It is hard to persuasively express to people who do not experience it why it can become such a consuming approach to life. Bodybuilders achieve a particular form of *corporeal conceptualisation* of their bodies. This is developed through capably using complicated programmes of resistance training that see the summoning and tempering of tempestuous affects. An understanding of the body progressively evolves, continually unfolding an always provisional mapping of bodily capacity and personal transformation; one cannot precisely plan a workout three months in advance, as one does not know what one will be capable of doing and becoming by then. This is an instance where Spinoza's thought can be particularly helpful and, moreover, accessible. Doing-learning-bodybuilding-training involves the development of a corporeal conceptualisation that is something like *tissue awareness*. It entails learning that one's body is composed of a variety of tissues that are differentiated by their capacities for sense and movement. Spinoza helps us to think about tissue awareness as a knowledge that is indissociably conceptual *and* physical. Further, he suggests that human bodies are aggregates; composed of any other number of bodies that cohere through affectively charged relations of motion and rest, of which we can have a more or less adequate idea. By tempering experiences of muscular fatigue at the limits of bodily ability, *bodybuilders gain a more adequate sense of what their bodies can do* by refining their perception of the affective and motile capacities of muscle cells, fibres and structures.

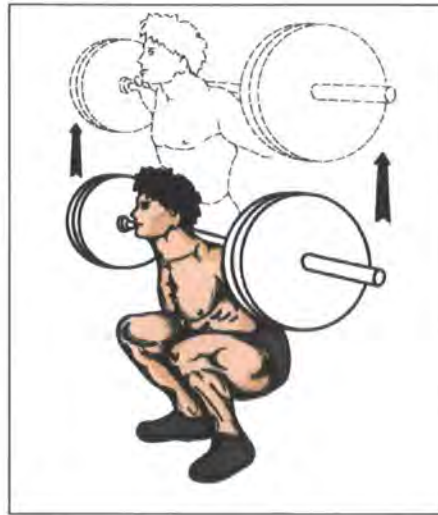
Becoming aware of the differentiation of one's body tissues is fundamental to doing-learning-bodybuilding-training. Training regions of muscular tissue in isolation from one another allows the mapping of intensities *through* aggregations of muscle fibre. Sensation is not simply located on the surface of hermetically sealed human bodies. Through dedicated progressive resistance training, body tissues are innervated with a degree of intensity that the *flesh did not anticipate*. Different aggregations of muscle fibres learn how to contract in isolation from surrounding regions of tissue. Examples include learning how to feel, flex and eventually 'spread' your lats, the latter being a standard

bodybuilding pose that requires enormous flexibility in the shoulder blades. Exercises that stimulate back muscles were often highlighted by gym members as giving a particular satisfaction in the days following a workout. The soreness of a good session remains traced through these regions of flesh that are typically not 'felt' during daily activities outside the gym, usually providing thoroughly expected, tacit functions and rarely breaching the threshold of conscious awareness. It is much easier to imagine having tired legs than it is to apprehend deep muscular exhaustion in the muscles between the shoulder blades. Another example is provided by the development of awareness of the shoulder muscles (deltoids). With practised use of dumbbell raises to target all three deltoids heads (the anterior, medial and posterior) the complexity and beauty of the shoulder joint becomes apparent. An awareness of the separation of its constitutive bodies, traced in pain and evident in an ability to flex each muscle independently, renders its functional coherence all the more affecting and *all the more inspiring*.

There are other body tissues than muscular tissue involved in bodybuilding. Furthermore, the capacities of muscle tissue vary immensely according to its location in the body. Connective tissues, such as tendons and ligaments, provide stability. They can be strengthened through progressive resistance training, but can also be a weak link; shortly before I left the gym, one of the gym members suffered an avulsion fracture as a tendon in his knee separated from the bone during a squat; his body had suddenly and dramatically exceeded the limit of what it could do without beginning to disaggregate. Doing-learning-bodybuilding-training involves learning to appreciate the stability afforded by supportive tissues. It involves *learning to apprehend the limits of its tolerance to stress*. Sensing the stress tolerance of a body tissue is crucial to successfully *tempering, as oppose to tolerating* pain and discomfort. Bodybuilding training involves learning to distinguish between different forms of pain; the pain that builds in a muscle as it reaches failure; the pain traced through muscles in the days following an intense workout; the pain of a muscle

tear; or the pain of damaged connective tissues. Performing free bar squats, a difficult and exhausting exercise with a reputation for reducing the strongest body to jelly, involves learning; how to keep balance at the lowest point in the squat; how to hold the bar across the shoulders; how to maintain a stable groove for the knees to move in, etc.

Figure 8. The free-bar squat⁶⁵



A bodybuilder must learn to attack the pain of muscle exhaustion and seek its agonising intensification. This requires learning to identify the sharper, more located pain of a muscle tear, learning to anticipate when to stop attacking that sensation and learning to sense when the tear has repaired sufficiently to allow training to resume.

These processes draw upon broader capacities to temper emotion. Gym members at Curzon spoke to me about; overcoming nerves prior to a heavy legs workout; managing frustration at being injured and unable to train; and controlling a taste for foods that provide inadequate nutrition and accumulate excess body fat. Learning capacities to apprehend what one's body is and may become capable of, is fundamental to doing-learning-bodybuilding-training.

⁶⁵ Image from www.building-muscle101.com

Whilst this was also true of doing-learning-boxing at Butterworth, the manner of anticipation developed in Curzon is altogether different. At Curzon, gym members manage the balance of remaining fixated upon *inculcated* movements in order to accumulate muscular stress and fatigue whilst *improvising* with sensations that accumulate in the muscle as it reaches its functional limits; one must *hold* technique whilst *pushing through* pain. Experiences of muscular failure are understood through colloquialisms, such as 'the pump' (the sensation of muscle becoming engorged with blood) and 'the burn' (the sensation of micro-tears opening up in muscle). One must learn to anticipate these sensations and meet them with energy and aggression whilst retaining fine motile control. A bodybuilder responds to muscular exhaustion by very slightly adjusting lifting technique; not to make the lift easier, but so as to get as much muscular damage out of each remaining repetition as possible. In Butterworth ABC, the unexpected stimuli that prompt improvisational skills are located in the movements made by another person. In Curzon, the unexpected emerges from the unfamiliar reaches of one's own bodily capacity; from human physiological propensity. This has implications regarding the pedagogical relationships and in turn the social affiliations enabled on the gym-floor.

3.2 Pedagogy, bodily experience and affiliation

Developing tissue awareness requires that one develops a set of skills that combine and balance a sophisticated appreciation of incredible complexity with temperate tolerance of painful simplicity. Bodybuilding training is simple, in that exhausting muscles, giving them adequate rest and feeding them the correct foods is a basic formula for forcing them to grow. Yet it is painful, in that living this formula requires a capacity to continue to move the body against resistance, in a very technically specific manner, through intense physical discomfort. Further complications arise in the doing. Planning a bodybuilding regime involves the adding up and evaluation of a mixture of scientific, pseudo-scientific, anecdotal and apocryphal advice. Guidance given in the gym is mostly derived from personal experience and trade magazines. Yet, confusingly

for the newcomer, it is typically portrayed and often understood as fact. It is through the circulation of *bodybuilding lore* that the industries that support and depend upon the sport find profitable purchase upon gym devotees. Nutritional supplement companies promise to provide proteins with 'advanced amino acid formulas' to help 'blast through plateaus'. Equipment companies assure clients that their machines offer revolutionary advances and are capable of rewarding effort by stimulating the maximum amount of muscle fibre. Magazines that float around in Curzon assure readers of the benefits of this or that technique for exhausting this or that region of musculature. The affective experience of tempering and pushing through discomfort is at the heart of the complexities met whilst navigating bodybuilding culture. This challenge is met by these men cooperatively.

The circulation of bodybuilding lore, as talk-about-the-work, occupies much of the talk-in-the-work at Curzon, whereby individuals impart advice to one another and exchange anecdotes. Gav spends much of each evening passing on guidance through stories about his experiences of training and competing.

"You see Rob, you've got to think of your body like this; you're at a five, you go in there and do your squats and when you come out you're at a four. You take your rest, come back a week later and you're at a six. Do it again and a week later you're at a seven. But you do it more than once a week and you're five, four, five, four, three, five, four. You don't get anywhere. After four or five days you get scar tissue growing over the fibre, and that's your muscle growth. I trained hard for a year doing squats twice a week, and I didn't get anywhere, and I wondered why!"

Gav in conversation with me, on the steps to Curzon Gym after an evening working out, 27th February.

Bodybuilding training involves working the body's motile capacities against carefully orchestrated and calibrated physical resistance. This resistance is

simply a means to an end; the growth of new muscle tissue. A bodybuilder *seeks a particular sensation* that is indicative of a muscular exhaustion that will, with adequate rest and nutrition, result in muscle growth. Recognising and 'attacking' this sensation is the fundamental capacity required by, and developed through, doing-learning-bodybuilding-training. The organisational tenets and compromises that follow are designed to intensify this experience in specific regions of muscular tissue. A typical bodybuilding workout, of which there are normative guidelines but infinite variations, has a similar conceptual starting point to a boxing training regime. The bodily movements necessary to stimulate muscular growth are conceptually disaggregated and trained in isolation; bringing the wrist to the shoulder to develop the biceps, or the shoulders to the ears to develop the trapezius. When doing-learning-boxing-training, boxing technique provides the reference points for mapping such movements. But when doing-learning-bodybuilding-training, those points are provided by the composition of human musculature and a received, normative notion of what constitutes a bodybuilding physique, of which once again there are innumerable variations.

A weekly training regime is called a split. A split divides the training week up by targeting different muscles on different days. Each workout *maps intensity through regions of muscle tissue*. Certain combinations will prevent a bodybuilder from getting the most out of their routine; training arms on the day before a shoulder workout leaves the triceps too tired to transmit sufficient stress into the deltoid muscles. Routines lived outside the gym are just as important as these mechanical limitations when planning weekly training schedules. Men training in Curzon develop a split appropriate to their personal aspirations and life priorities. Geoff and Darren drive trucks for a living and organise their training on a rolling weekly basis, as it is difficult for them to know any further in advance when and where they will be required to work. From early February, when Gareth entered the phase of 'competition training' for the upcoming Mr Calder Valley competition, he would no longer train with Tom.

Gareth's increasingly regular workouts, with higher numbers of reps and sets, were designed to burn fat and maximise muscle definition, something Tom had no interest in. Other motivations narrated by the gym members include; 'getting ready for the beach' (Kris kept careful note of this waist measurement to gauge his progress, with one eye on the summer); ambitions to participate in bodybuilding competitions (particularly Shane, Gav's protégé, and Dan, who often gave me a lift home from the gym); vaguely 'staying in shape'; and simply 'getting big and ugly'.

Whilst gym members publicly narrate their involvement in training, the inspirational component of doing-learning-bodybuilding-training entails an element of motivation-in-motion that resists being neatly summed up. Training and socialising in Curzon entails sensate and emotional experiences that render doing-learning-bodybuilding-training somehow addictive. Indeed, addiction was an explanation I often heard used on the gym-floor as a way of understanding the life encompassing commitment many of these men have to training. I often felt a vague, visceral excitement when anticipating going to the gym. Although reaching muscular exhaustion is often agonising, the alternative of falling short of it through a lack of effort becomes viscerally repellent. Progressive resistance training involves summoning intensities and mapping them into muscle fibres despite that exhaustion. Where those fibres are subjected to sufficient stress through repetitive, strenuous contractions, micro-tears open up. With rest and adequate nutrition muscular hypertrophy is stimulated, as muscles grow in response to these tears. This mechanical function of muscular growth is peculiar to muscular tissue, which is *capable of anticipating future stress*. *Potential* movements and stresses that muscle may be subjected to *materialise* by being built into tissue, *which grows in anticipation of the next workout*. The experience of damaging muscle and feeling it repair itself (a vague and rewarding itchy sensation that is the onset of tissue awareness) compels one, *persuades* one to return to the gym. The physiology of muscular inspiration is caught up in a compelling, persuasive apprehension of the gym and the people

and things therein, which cannot be reduced to articulable purpose or explanatory motivation (pace accounts of motivation in gym culture, Chapter 3).

Furthermore, *the personal abilities, social arrangements and possibilities that the gym affords are indissociable from bodily experiences of growing muscle.* Whilst in training for the Mr Calder Valley competition, Gareth made use of the 'drop set' technique when training his shoulders. This involves lifting a weight until exhaustion, but then foregoing a rest to immediately carry on with a lighter weight, repeating this process with progressively less weight until only a comparatively small amount can be moved. Shane often helps Gareth by passing him the required equipment and shouting encouragement to get him through the experience. The targeted muscles cramp up almost unbearably. It takes considerable skill, and also cooperation from other gym members, to be able to summon and direct as much aggression as possible through these long and painful sets.⁶⁶ Such temperance of discomfort is a highly refined affective capacity. Temperance is not merely continence. If these men were simply and masochistically putting up with pain, it is unlikely that gyms would be popular. When using the drop set technique, muscles feel as though they might burst as they are pushed, again and again, up to the limit of their capacity. Gav's use of this technique with the leg press on Fridays is one of the most awe inspiring sights in Curzon's working week, drawing a regular crowd as men gather round and pass comment to one another.

Bodybuilders seek the greatest intensity of muscular sensation possible. So as to enable this the gym-floor articulates an inspirational infrastructure that is carefully designed to support the summoning and mapping of intensities through body tissues. Gav's trophies, prominent alongside those of other bodybuilding champions, cover the shelves behind his desk. As do pictures of

⁶⁶ An enormously wide range of imaginative techniques are used by gym members, including; 'supersets', performing exercises consecutively without any rest; 'stop-pause reps', taking a break of a few seconds before squeezing out one or two more reps; or 'cheat reps', departing from strict form at the point of failure to achieve a final, ragged, repetition or two.

bodybuilders who have formerly trained in the gym, often signed with personal thanks to “The guys at Curzon”. Framed photographs display Gav, Barry and Gareth performing squats and deadlifts, the most intense exercises seen in the gym; their faces contorted with effort, printed and framed. Relics of an irretrievable bodily event now displayed to inspire its reprise. As in Butterworth, inspirational slogans cover the walls. “Power without control is nothing”. Some echo the fleshy themes of gym banter. One sign offers a narration of a bodybuilder fighting down his nervous energy to push through a set of squats, only to be violently sick with the effort afterwards. The free weights section is immediately in front of a long, body height mirror. When training there, one is confronted with one’s own gurning, reddening face, providing a feedback that amplifies the intensity of the experience. The squat rack and various leg press and leg curl machines are gathered in one of the far corners from the office, creating a small gym within a gym, a bubble of aggression to help push men through the most intensely demanding exercises a bodybuilder faces.

The relationship between training partners is the most intimate form of social affiliation achieved within Curzon. Training partners make use of a variety of techniques to inspire the greatest possible efforts from each another. They offer encouragement by prompting one another to visualise the physique they are trying to achieve; Gareth shouts “come on Shane-o, shoulders like boulders” as Shane performs forward dumbbell laterals. Training partners also correct one another’s form during a set, in order to keep the stress of the exercise focused upon the targeted regions of muscle tissue; Gav places his hands upon the small of Shane’s back when he performs lateral pull downs, reminding him not to sway his body and ‘cheat’ on the exercise quite so much. As explained above, gym members might exchange assistance or encouragement on an ad hoc basis. In contrast, relationships between training partners develop over months and in many instances years. These men know one another intimately well; they understand exactly what to say or do and when to do so, in order to inspire the greatest possible intensity in their partner. Not only are they able to

apprehend their own muscular exhaustion, *they learn to apprehend when their partner is reaching muscular failure* and needs a little help to keep the muscle moving. Some men respond well to being encouraged; "perfect form, keep it coming". Others get a boost from being chastised; "don't be a quitter, you've got plenty left". Learning how to get the best from a partner involves a deep appreciation of their personality, which may only develop over time. It is a form of affiliation that exceeds rational explanation and confounds the dulled simplicity inherent to the suggestion that these men are mired in disaffection.

As is the case in Butterworth ABC, in Curzon Gym pedagogical relationships spread across the gym-floor and are implicated in the social arrangements through which men share in the achievement of inspired social order. Men exchange nutritional advice, demonstrate how to lift a weight, physically assist one another with repetitions, provide verbal encouragement, etc. These culturally ingrained pedagogies provide a rationale for interaction between these men. This chapter has noted intercultural affiliations struck up in Curzon Gym. The question of *what enables intercultural affiliation on the gym-floor* where it is disabled across much of Burnley is significant for the town's politics of race. Where Gav and Joe build their friendship upon witty exchanges, or where Yusef goes from being a nervous newcomer to training regularly with Geoff and Darren, these possibilities are enabled by logics of affiliation and bodily experiences that sustain this inspirational culture. The descriptions of experience and cultural performance offered in this chapter are charged with masculine significances (summoning aggression, controlling emotion, sexual humour). As in Butterworth ABC, raced difference goes almost entirely unreferenced. The performance of masculinity is much more eye catching than the subtle latency of race, which usually only reportably figures in the gym's organisation during each evening's transitional period. Curzon sees a differential play between a spectacular masculinity and the subtle latency of race. The possibilities of intercultural affiliation in Curzon Gym are predicated

upon logics of affiliation that are charged with masculine meaning and rooted in intense, embodied experiences of inspiration.

'Deadlift Friday' is a fortnightly event at Curzon. A deadlift requires the lifting of a much greater amount of weight than other exercises. I have seen Gareth deadlift in excess of 500lbs. Special arrangements are required to inspire sufficient intensity to get this enormous weight moving. Every other Friday, Gav and his clique close in around the lifter to shout encouragement, taking it in turns to compete against themselves and one another. The scene is engineered to ratchet up the intensity and to transmit it to the lifter's muscles, where it will open micro-tears in the tissue fibres. A visible manifestation of the ability and experience of these men, this ritual is also an exclusive and powerful assertion of their authority in the gym. Notably, the deadlifts are performed at six o'clock. As such, they are wrapped up long before Curzon's Asian gym members turn up. The exclusivity of the ritual is non-negotiable, as is the authority of these five white men as the senior members of the gym. It would be too simplistic an analysis to consider that Asian men are marginalised by this tradition, and an entirely presumptuous one to read nefarious motive into the arrangement. However, it does illustrate that the achievement of this inspirational culture does not operate an uncomplicatedly deracialising and inclusive dynamic, just as inspiration is not an irresistible force of intercultural connection. Indeed, Joe and his friends sometimes take equipment into the gym's second room, generating their own exclusively intense atmosphere. In this way, Burnley's raced segregations come to be reflected in the ongoing achievement of the gym's inspirational infrastructure. With reference to the capacity of muscle tissue to grow in response to inspiration, the result is that *Asian flesh grows in response to and anticipation of Asian intensity and white flesh in relation to white intensity*. A segregated geography of race being written into the generation of human flesh *beneath* skin and its pigmentation. Moments of intercultural cooperation are important if these men are not use the same gym to grow into separate cultures.

4. Cooperative individualism and intercultural affiliation

Curzon Gym comes together as an inspiring place through the achievement of a particular ethos. As in Butterworth ABC, the ethos in Curzon is *individualistic*. The main business of gym culture is to develop one's own body. In contrast to Butterworth, at Curzon individualism emerges from a more *cooperative* and less competitive style of social affiliation. There is less emphasis upon producing sportsmen who can compete for the club. Instances where gym members try to compete with one another are rare and where this occurs, it is as a means of pushing one another further; Niko and Primo often pass a weighted bar back and forth, trying to beat each other's total number of reps as a means of cooperatively generating intensity. Furthermore, at Butterworth ABC, in-gym competition served to establish relations of authority between club mates. At Curzon, in-gym competition is more explicitly framed as a struggle against the limits of what one's body is capable of. This is a struggle that people will go out of their own way to assist one another in, which, as discussed above, is also a way of working out reputations and relationships of authority. One gains authority in Curzon not by putting people 'in their place', but rather by helping them to have a good workout. Gym members work in concert to perform techniques for transmitting intensity into one another's spirits and muscles; applying extra leverage as a partner reaches muscle failure, or barking encouragement as exhaustion begins to sap aggression. The cooperation involved in composing this infrastructure of inspiration is far removed from the generic sense of division and disaffection gained by walking through Burnley Wood and along into Daneshouse, places where many of the men who use the gym live.

The cooperative ethos of doing-learning-bodybuilding-training in Curzon involves relations characterised by a number of forms of exchange. Relations of exchange alive in the gym operate through various media and articulate on different scales through material and affective flows, relative fixities and acquisitions. At intra-corporeal scales, exchanges in body chemistry take effect.

Organic nutrients, hormones and steroids⁶⁷ are transported and assimilated, delivered by blood into muscular cells where they prompt the accretion of body tissue as muscles repair and grow in response to training. Muscular fibres exchange pressure, shifting and realigning to gain purchase on weighted resistance. Stress is transferred into them, opening up small tears in tissue that then becomes hungry for nutrients with which to repair itself. The weighted resistance crucial to promoting this stress is found in the equipment that fills the gym-floor. The many and varied apparatus that are available are carefully designed to exchange pressure from their moving parts, through their static frame and into the muscles of the user. For example, stanchions placed in the centre of the gym support a set of cross cables. They frame the transmission of resistance from the weight stacks at either end of the structure, down the steel cable and into the lower pectoral and front deltoid muscles with which they are brought into relation.

Figure 9. Mapping intensity through the body



⁶⁷ The use of steroids provides a fascinating set of conceptual possibilities, ranging over the use of growth hormone, artificial growth hormone, artificial and actual animal growth hormone, and other growth promoting substances, questioning the limits of human-animal-inanimate specificity, and the status of 'the natural' as regards intramuscular and subcutaneous prosthetics.

The gym-floor at Curzon gains stability within broader economies of exchange and acquisition. The renting, equipping and maintenance of the gym-floor involves relationships of asset ownership and capital exchange that are bound up in friendships. The equipment in Curzon was bought by Gav many years ago, from a personal friend who worked in the business of supplying gyms. Whilst the equipment is in need of updating, and indeed is perpetually reported as being under threat as such, the necessary funds are not available. Curzon is not financially profitable. Its continuation relies upon the informal arrangements set out in this chapter, whereby young Asian men attend the gym outside of its supposed opening hours. These men are *trusted* to pay when Gav is not there in the evenings and at weekends. This explicit bond of trust straddles the colour-culture line in Burnley that Cattle and other commentators worry has become thoroughgoing separation. Furthermore, this trust is not affectively anaemic. It is animated by the *interpersonal chemistry* that Gav shares with particular Asian men such as Joe. The mutual resonance that sparks up when their characters come into relation underpins this arrangement, making the financial solvency and continuation of the gym possible.

Chapter 4 suggested a notion of trust that is broader than one of a tacit contract for measurable, mutual benefit between rational actors. Trust may be thought of as the operation of cultural assumptions that enable gym members to anticipate and respond to one another. The men training in Curzon learn a number of anticipatory skills. They learn how to anticipate their own muscular exhaustion, the flagging aggression of their training partner and the humour of Gav's anecdotes. Trust, in this sense, enables the ongoing achievement of an ordered and inspiring gym-floor. As such, it is not best thought of as a reaction to the spectre of disorder or disaffection, nor as a contractual vouchsafe against these threats. Gav does not trust Joe *because* his business depends upon it, nor do men help each other train *because* they want help in return. Cooperation in Curzon does not engender inspired social order *because* men find refuge from the uncertainties of a town subject to economic and cultural transition. Curzon

Gym does not feel like the last, nostalgic stand of a masculine culture that is rooted in the past and uncertain of the present. It is rather too fragile and much too dynamic to be understood as an attempt to forge stability amidst change. Its social complexity and affective variety is delicately conditioned by the unpredictable interaction of characters. The cultural durability it affords requires an ongoing management of relationships, whereby personalities share an arcane interaction that is irreducible to rational explanation and broad affective characterisation. Studies of young white men in urban areas that read a reactionary conservatism into white working class masculinities may be troubled by the complicated achievement and affective dynamism of 'stability' in Curzon Gym.

The trusting relationships shared by men in Curzon, as they exchange money, advice, banter and intensity, are not expressive of a reactionary distrust of what Burnley is becoming outside the gym's walls. Relations of trust engender a form of interpersonal *empathy* that emerges from and contributes to social change in Burnley, rather than forming a bulwark against it. Gym members share advice and intensity as they sense that they share in a similar embodied experience of training; of the burn, the pump, the deep muscular pain that follows a good workout and of tissue awareness. That sense is more than a fictive imagining as a common sense assumption that other people share one's own experience of familiar practice. Through developing tissue awareness, bodybuilders gain a more adequate idea of what their bodies are capable of doing; moving, growing, feeling. *They also gain an ability to intuit that process when it is located in the body of another person*, and to anticipate *how* rather than what another person feels. When a bodybuilder places an index finger underneath the bar as his partner reaches exhaustion on a set of bench presses, he is anticipating the minute application of pressure necessary to keep that bar moving, and not an ounce more. In such moments, gym members reach out to one another across the pedagogical gap, whether through manual assistance, encouragement, banter or advice. The empathetic cooperation that enables inspired social order

in Curzon Gym significantly complicates the notion of Burnley's young white men as disaffected.

Moreover, the gym bears forms of social affiliation more meaningful and located than Cattle's abstract hopes for a celebration of diversity may appreciate. Where young Asian and white men share the gym-floor in Curzon, they cooperatively achieve a context of shared cultural experience with a sufficiently vivid quality to engender empathetic bonds. During the nightly transition period these bonds of affection take hold and flesh out a notion of intercultural affiliation. One evening in February, Tom spent time teaching an Asian man how to perform squats on the Smith machine; feet forward to place stress upon the thighs, back straight, lowering in a smooth movement until the thighs are parallel to the floor and then exploding up through the same range of motion. Another evening, Gareth took time to teach an Asian teenager how to perform dumbbell military presses; shoulders and elbows back, palms facing forwards, spreading the strain between the anterior and medial heads of the deltoids. These interactions, which involved patient explanation, good natured conversation and physical contact, are a reassuring counterpoint to the images of young white and Asian men on the streets in the summer of 2001. Further hope may be drawn from the infectious humour of the quick-fire exchanges shared by Gav and Joe, which often sparked conversations between their respective entourages. Kris is one of the more charismatic members of the gym, able to share banter with almost anyone training at the same time as him. He would often spend time sitting on the floor talking, or else chasing around the gym with the young Asian boy who otherwise sits patiently whilst his father trains. By shattering the civil inattention that regulates the co-presence of personalities at Curzon Gym, the tension that might arise when young Asian and white men come into contact may also dissolve amidst affectively varied and unpredictable interactions of personalities.

Moments such as these contrast, however, with less promising ones. This chapter has discussed the arrangement whereby Gav gives sets of keys to Joe and his friends, the young Asian men who work in the garage next door and use the gym after Gav has gone home. The moments of intercultural affiliation noted above largely take place during the transition period, when white gym members are leaving and Asian members are beginning to arrive. One either side of this period, race is more prone to being publicly cited. A particular example arose in March, which saw a source of tension emerge in the gym. Gav changed the locks on the doors because he suspected that 'some of the Asians' had copied the keys, 'passed them around' and were using the gym without paying. The basis of his concerns was coming to the gym late one weekend evening and finding it 'full of them'. Another evening, an item was playing on the radio about a hit and run killer of a young girl in Burnley having been sentenced to just 12 weeks in prison. Geoff spent a lot of the evening fulminating about the judgment, opining that had the driver been white, he would have 'got life'; "fair's fair Rob, you've got to be even handed. It's gone too far to the coloureds". Earlier that evening, another gym member had sat shaking his head through the radio report, finally getting up to continue training, spitting out "fucking pakis" as he did so. The early evening at Curzon was, at times, further marked by outbursts with racial themes. A group of three men who tended to train together from five o'clock through to half past six were vocal in their support for the BNP. The local government election period in May saw radio reports on the modest electoral success of the BNP loudly cheered. Such outbursts disappeared, however, as the evening progressed and young Asian men began to arrive. The process of handing over the achievement of inspirational culture got underway.

Chapter 7

The political value of inspirational culture

1. Inspiring intercultural affection

1.1 Inspiration, race and masculinity

The foregoing ethnographies provide accounts of the author's experiences of learning how to box, build muscle and socialise in gyms set amidst Burnley's urban hinterlands. These studies trace the entanglements of inspiration, ability, masculinity and race in these cooperatively achieved body cultures. In both Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym, masculinities are conspicuously mapped onto and through capable bodies-in-action. In comparison, the operation of race is much less eye-catching. Indeed, each gym realises unspoken moratoria on the antagonism attached to raced difference in Burnley. Race is typically vaguely tangible and only obliquely as it is suppressed beneath the *threshold of reportability* in distinctive ways, albeit never completely nor irreversibly. In Butterworth, a colour-blind meritocratic ethos writes race out of the organisational function of the gym-floor, allowing the flow of inspiration to enable both Asian and white bodies. Contrastingly, inspirational culture in Curzon sees a truce, whereby Asian and white men mostly use the gym at different times. Here, race is broadly *written into* the achievement of the gym-floor, although in manner that enables intercultural affiliations in the interstices of that arrangement.

This chapter works through how the understated salience of race coexists with more arresting performances of masculinity. Raced categories remain latent to the achievement of social order, in such a way that these perpetually threaten irruption and divisive reassertion. Where race *does* become reportable, the antagonisms it stokes across Burnley surface alongside it. Chapter 5 noted the unspoken but tangible tension arising where Joe and his friends suddenly become the majority in Curzon, or hastily switch the radio to a local Asian

station. Consideration of how these gym cultures influence Burnley's racial politics should begin with examining their construction as inspirational venues that validate particular masculinities. The view of Burnley achievable from these gyms is a particular and male centred one. However, if recognised as not being the definitive view, it may be seen as one with significance for the town's racial politics.

The trope of *topographies of inspiration* is used to pursue this line of thought. Inspiration has an infrastructure. Its instigation and transmission is supported by arrays of motivational signs, energetic personas, the sounds and smells of the gym, the sensation of landing a clean punch, framed pictures of heroic figures, and much more besides. This chapter thinks about how inspiration works as motivation-in-motion by buzzing through these culturally located topographies. This approach highlights that inspired inhabitations of space are enabled by singular comings-together of personality, affect, matter and representation. Even as racial difference bubbles below the representational radar, affective capacities are inspired that might spark up intercultural bonds of affection. Intercultural affiliations that elaborate on the basis of these bonds cannot be abstracted from the physical experiences of boxing and bodybuilding. This chapter develops the contention that *the inspiration young men find in these gyms is politically enabling, in a way not replicated elsewhere in Burnley. What marks these gyms out is that they are carefully engineered to cultivate affective capacities, which, in turn, establish connections between bodies irrespective of their racial marking.* The slower, more staccato rhythms of Burnley Wood, Manchester Road and the Indoor Markets, are not so capable of exciting personal capacities and inspiring durable intercultural affiliation.

Chapters 1 and 2 reviewed striking residential segregation in Burnley. Moreover, the time the author spent with his neighbours in Burnley Wood, and with Gay, Donald and all the other characters in Burnley's gyms, made it clear that the terms Asian and white are used in an uncomplicated manner in the

town. This chapter underlines that in a town where these divisions seem static, topographies of inspiration have significance precisely because they are complex, ambiguous, unpredictable and messy. The second half of the chapter argues that, as such, it will be difficult to value their potential contribution to Burnley's future. Appreciating the political value of these cultures will first require an intimacy with the living histories through which they emerge, slowly and arcanelly. The author could only begin to do this in a six month period. It is hoped that enough is done to illustrate that the apparent obduracy of convention and the repetition of practice is shot through with inspiration, enabling varied abilities and personal affiliations. Inspiration renders the routine and the everyday anything but prosaic or mundane.

In the below, provisional notions of inspiration and affective capacity are built upon as theoretical perspectives on the body, rhythm and practice are borrowed and linked to empirical evidence.⁶⁸ A concept of rhythm is adopted as a means of expressing the experience of being *amidst* the *production* of space in these gyms. Rhythm is deployed chiefly with a view to its use, via Deleuze, in non-representational approaches (McCormack: 2002, Turetzky: 2002). A potential conflict arises, however, with the reaction against difference set out in Chapter 3. A Deleuzian concept of rhythm relates a sense of how territories of space coalesce as eventful refrains gain constituency and meaning. For example, the rhythm of a heavy bag being worked is not merely dull repetition of the same punch. Rather, training sees the emergence of a *differently* capable assemblage of bone, arm, leather, heavy bag, gym, etc. Following the analytic framework developed in Chapter 3, the use of the concept of rhythm here concedes a *constitutive* role for a notion of bodies becoming-*otherwise* through repetitive practice. Importantly, however, this does not preface an ambition to valorise somatic rhythm because it potentially contributes to the exposure of

⁶⁸ Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual perspective at the heart of this thesis. In the current chapter, theoretical props and tools are used in a more ranging, though not unselective, manner. There are implicit relationships between the Spinozist position set out in Chapter 3 and the borrowing of concepts here that may be seen as room for future conceptual development.

inconsistent racial ideology. Instead, at issue here is how bonds arise to contradict the material separateness alive in Burnley.

1.2 Inspiration in two complex male cultures

Inspiration offers this thesis an alternative, and less explanatorily confident, conception of what drives behaviour than is offered by analytical narratives of motivation. This critical space emerges from an analytical trajectory gathering throughout the thesis. Chapter 2 reviewed studies of young white men living out social transitions in changing urban environments. It rejected analyses that see their behaviour as motivated by monotone, negative affects. Such an approach is insufficient to the affective complexity of youth cultures as they are lived. In turn, Chapter 3 criticised studies of gym culture that nebulously locate motivations for physical training in an affectually staid psychological appetency. In response to these dissatisfactions, an alternative concept of inspiration has been developed as a means of creating critical distance from explanatorily heavy tropes of motivation. That distance was also adopted so as to highlight the inadequacy of Cattle's notion of disaffection, as a generically demotivating deficiency of self-esteem and confidence. In order to better apprehend how inspiration works through Butterworth and Curzon, ethnographies of these gyms have sought to appreciate a non-purposive experience of physical training; people work out for reasons that words cannot quite sum up and to effects that could not have been planned for. As such, abilities may be stimulated that will be missed by a preoccupation with narrowly assigning motivation or purpose. Furthermore, those very abilities may signal how young men are, already, capably shaping geographies of intercultural relation amidst the interstices of Burnley's parallel cultures.

The vague notion of disaffection that this thesis seeks to complicate, implies a state of socially ingrained personal, political incapacity. In response, accounts of the experience of inspiration have been explored as a means of complicating appreciation of the abilities of the men using these gyms. In the immediacy of its

experience, inspiration involves being transported by intensity. One's persona and body are engrossed by an industrious surplus. Becoming inspired entails being switched *on* by an apprehension of the 'restless spirit' of 'enactment' (Dewsbury et al: 2002, p.438). One taps into 'the push that keeps the world rolling over; the energy that fuels change' (Thrift: 2000a, p.216). Training in Butterworth and Curzon entails durations of intense inhabitation of space, where conscious thought melts into instinctive abilities. As fists fly amidst rapid exchanges in the ring, or as legs scream in agonising exhaustion at the end of a set of squats, experience contracts to an immediacy of movement, sensation and affect. Moments of inspiration are spoken of via colloquialisms.

Bodybuilders mention 'the pump', where muscles swell with blood and pain and soak up one's powers of concentration. Boxers sometimes talk about entering 'the zone' after catching a sharp right hand in the face, sparking a sudden vitality that floods leaden arms with renewed life. In each case, a visceral excitement is provoked that spews activity down deadened limbs; gum shields are bitten and thick arms shake uncontrollably. Tracing the abilities and affiliations provoked amidst cultures built around such experiences, must begin by characterising the practical complexity through which inspiration takes effect. Doing so will do much to complicate the homogeneous, politically demotivating torpor evoked by Cattle's abstract worry for the disaffection of Kris, Gav, Sid, Hamid, Geoff, etc.

The practice of sparring illustrates the complexity that adds up in, and qualifies access to, experiences of inspiration. To be able to draw inspiration from a sparring session requires that one learns how to anticipate and move in relation to progressively more unpredictable targets; the heavy bag, speed ball, target pads held by a trainer and finally a sparring partner; '[e]xercise is that technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated' (Foucault: 1979, p.161). Butterworth is also cluttered with specialised equipment. As Foucault indicates (with reference to the effect the invention of the rifle had on the practice of military drills) this graduation

incorporates the emergence and incorporation of technologies; leather-hide heavy bags with an inner lining of foam to give a more 'responsive' feel; cow leather sparring gloves with inner hand moulds to protect knuckles from bruising. Sid and Hamid were regular sparring partners. The improvised performances they put on in the ring, half dance routine and half fight, were only possible following years of experience learning how to navigate the rules, attitudes, equipment and innumerable exercises seen on the gym-floor. These details are not merely incidental to the furiously involving inspiration available in the ring. When caught up in inspiration, action seems simplicity itself. Other thoughts evaporate from mind and body as the boxer becomes the movements, sensations and affects of sparring. Putting an unprepared newcomer into a sparring session would, however, make the means and skills required to draw inspiration from sparring painfully clear. Experiences of inspiration are qualified by practical complexity and the skills it demands. Similarly, the intercultural affiliations inspiration makes possible are artful achievements emerging from an enormous complexity of feeling and matter.

Furthermore, this practical complexity is thoroughly linked to the eye-catching masculinities being worked out in these gyms. Men training in Curzon draw inspiration from seeing their bodies assume new proportions, dimensions and capacities. Even a decade after the end of his professional career, Gav still takes enormous enjoyment from studying his physique in the mirror, prompting others to gather round, passing compliments and exchanging banter. The development of a physique resembling Gav's requires decades of exhausting, skilled and intelligent exercise. Bodybuilders train by conceptually breaking the body down into movements which they then apply repetitively, though with no little skill and intensity. The cultivation of tissue awareness, described in Chapter 6, illustrates that 'it is not the end product of matter that becomes significant but the dynamic process of materialisation through which it comes into being' (Colls: 2007, p.356). The muscular body materialises in response to the mapping of intensity through regions of tissue with different capacities to

grow, feel and move. A validated masculinity is written into the flesh of the body, right down to the bone, confusing distinction between that body as object and as lived; 'the first is a system of bones, muscles and flesh brought down at a point of space, the second shoots through space like a rocket to reveal the external object in its place' (Merleau-Ponty: 1962, p.92). As the men in Curzon go about achieving a serious training atmosphere, they are thrilled by manly banter and spurred on by aggressive encouragement; these energies are transmitted into body tissue, opening tears in muscular fibres. Flesh grows in response, *but also in anticipation* of the next workout and the application of even greater stress. Male flesh builds up into a functional body, from the inside-out.

The practical complexity that enables inspiration in these gyms also, therefore, constitutes performances of male body cultures. Inspiration is not untrammelled. It prompts recall of knowledges located in the body through training, infolded through habit (Harrison: 2000, Burkitt: 1994, 2002). Passages of inspiration leave marks upon and through the body, which provide channels of least resistance for inspiration to flow down and further gouge out. Some marks are more durable than others; beads of sweat roll down fragile, damp waterways; blood reaches deep into muscles through slowly developing capillary networks; new muscle tissue hard-wires particular movements and compartments into physiques (Staron et al 1991); caution is warned by memory engrams storing traces of an embarrassing failure to join in with gym banter (see Varela: 1999). The channels down which inspiration flows are *appropriate* within these male gym cultures. Thick arms, surly independence and sexual banter are all charged with male meaning.

Notably, inspiration is trammelled in some ways, and not in others, conditioning a differential interplay between race and gender. The sheer palpability of the masculinity that inspiration is so caught up in, sharply contrasts with the taboo of mentioning race in Butterworth ABC. Chapter 5 explains that race, as a

means of discriminating between people, is suppressed on the gym-floor. This is so as to enable discrimination between bodies more or less able to express inspiration appropriately to the manly task of boxing. There is also a differential play between gender and race in Curzon. The inspiration bodybuilders find as the contours of their body begin to assume the Herculean ideal bleeds into perception of pigmentation. Skin colour, which is typically seen as Asian or white in Burnley, is only reportably significant in so far as it picks out male muscular contours; it is only as significant as the body hair that Gav encouraged Gareth to shave off before his appearance in the Mr Calder Valley performance (although the reality that skin colour cannot be so briskly discarded illustrates its continued lurking beneath the threshold of reportability). The inspiration found in these male cultures of bodily augmentation is thereby implicated in an aesthetics of skin colour that contradicts the familiar line of assumption that leads through pigmentation, racial identity and essential difference, marking and dividing Burnley's society.

The interplay between inspiration, race and gender indicates cultures with rare political significance in Burnley, post-2001. But recognising inspiration must not become an uncomplicated celebration of motivation-in-motion. Chapter 6 noted that nervous young men were sometimes pushed to the side of Curzon Gym by Gav's intense workouts, unable to take inspiration from his supersized physique and personality. *Inspiration is not inevitably infectious*. The energy that fuels change can stall, because it is dependent upon the singular intangibles of personality. As Lorimer (2005) notes, 'one person's inspirational soundtrack can be another person's hellish racket' (p.87). Chapter 6 noted that Yusef became progressively more confident in his use of the gym, and by the summer was training regularly with Geoff and Darren. This intercultural relationship would not have developed had Yusef been too intimidated, or in too much pain, to return to the gym after beginning to train there in February.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Continued inspiration may require that one recognise, in more than a cognitive manner, that short term discomfort must at times be endured, that we may 'seek a greater good in the future

Indeed, to sustainably draw inspiration from training, men in Curzon must learn how to temper sometimes painful, sometimes rapturous experiences. Individuals add 'something extra' and unpredictable to the common 'techniques' used in the gym (Massumi: 2002 p.77), an 'x-factor' of sorts; *personality*. These gyms do not situate a masculinity around which men, Asian or white, can unproblematically converge. Whilst this chapter indicates the political significance of the intercultural affiliations possible in these gyms, the propensity for inspiration to move, fail or stall depends upon the differing and unfathomable abilities of unique personalities to temper it. The vague narrative of enablement that moves through disaffection to self-esteem cannot tolerate this. Yet it should not, in response, be replaced with a hopelessly optimistic one that characterises inspiration as an impersonal, unstoppable and progressive force bringing people into positive association.

Furthermore, those individuals assume distinctive affective capacities, the variety of which must be recognised amidst the gyms' eye-catching performances of masculinity. Chapter 3 set out a provisional notion of inspiration, via Spinoza's ethical philosophy, as the thrilling precipitance of capacities to affect, to be affected and to temper affection in positive accord with other people and things. Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate a range of affective capacities. These include, but are not limited to; summoning aggression, tempering embarrassment, attacking muscular discomfort and forming bonds of affection with contemporaries. The inspiration of those capacities must be seen in light of the masculine regimes through which they emerge. Indeed, such abilities as aggression, the concealing of emotion and tacit camaraderie are charged with masculine overtones. Nevertheless, their complexity and variety exceeds the generic diagnoses of disaffection seen in the Cattle and Clarke reports. Furthermore, they are hard to appreciate as responses to white male insecurity amidst a changing urban environment. The

in preference to a lesser good in the present' (*Ethics*, Part IV, Proposition LXVI). What matters is *whether someone is persuaded by that greater good*.

abilities of the young men using Butterworth and Curzon will be hard to sum up as an anxious protest, a generic gaining of self-esteem, or as the seeds of political enfranchisement. Instead, this section has begun to complicate recognition of the ways in which these men become capable through inspiration, underscoring; its practical complexity; the variety of affective capacity it moves through; the differential play between race and gender it is implicated in; and its unpredictable relationship to unique individuals. Inspiration significantly complicates thought on the political capacities of young white men in the context of Burnley's raced divisions.

1.3 The engineering of two topographies of inspiration

This section examines how inspiration moves through the gym-floor. It prepares for a fuller examination of the significance, for Burnley's racial politics, of the abilities and affiliations located in these male body cultures. Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym are ongoing achievements of *topographies of inspiration*. These require perpetual management. Skilled engineers, and particularly figures of authority such as Gav and Donald, construct and maintain the charismatic, material and representational infrastructures through which inspiration moves. Within these inspirational topographies, young men gain affective capacities and forge affectually imbued social affiliations. Moreover, the *rhythms* through which inspiration is experienced assume and manipulate racial significance. By considering how the layering of rhythms is engineered in the production of inspired social order, the working parts of the intercultural affiliations taking place in these gyms may be exposed. This section suggests that engineering these inspiring cultures entails active management of the differential play of race and masculinity, noted above. This management makes these gyms, and the men training in them, unique contributors to Burnley's urban racial politics. The masculinities highlighted in the above, and illustrated in the preceding ethnographies, remain implicit to this conceptualisation of inspirational infrastructure. Similarly, the operation of race and intercultural

affiliation are touched upon, although this discussion is essentially preparatory of a more direct analysis as such.

Many cultural geographers have eschewed understandings of space as a container of successive events, in favour of conceptualising it as gathering ongoing processes of transformation and becoming (see Thrift: 2003, Thrift and Crang: 2000, Thrift and May: 2001, Callon and Law: 2004 Crouch: 2003). Thinking about materials and things as contributing their own *rhythms* to the gym-floor, is a useful tool for understanding the topographies of inspiration at play in Butterworth and Curzon. Rhythms have been thought of, notably by Lefebvre, as 'what is most concrete' (2004, p.3), as itinerant temporalities that constitute a non-foundational grounding for histories of space (1991, p.117). Space accumulates in Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym as rhythms merge, becoming indistinct amidst singularly inspiring moments. These rhythms emanate from the body (heart beats, nerve pulses, muscle contractions), clocks and calendars, personality,⁷⁰ wailing sirens, rattling speed bags, etc. Particular muscle tissues located across the body regenerate and accumulate at different rates, underscoring the importance of the material to any notion of excess, as well as 'the importance of excess to any notion of the material' (Latham and McCormack: 2004, p.704, also see Anderson and Tolia-Kelly: 2004).

Different heavy bags and different dumbbell exercises produce their own rhythms that echo through the contraction of muscle fibre and the pumping of blood. Publicly archived traditions take longer to effect inspiration than a powerful personality or a striking physique; it takes time to be powerfully affected by the emotional gravity of the wall covered with the names of past boxers in Butterworth. In both Butterworth and Curzon, the ongoing achievement of social order and the engineering of rhythmic space are functionally indissociable. Inspirational compositions emerge as the different temporalities written into personalities, body tissues, pictures and slogans

⁷⁰ 'Eloquence', see Lefebvre (2004, p.18), also see Chapter 3 on 'personality'.

overlap and inflect one another. The gym-floor in Butterworth is not experienced as an empty space that is *then* filled by equipment, people and cultural artefacts with already coherent inspirational properties that *then* come together. The interrelation of the rhythms of the gym engenders enormous complexity. This cannot be grasped by dully uniform notions of the generic arrhythmia of youth disaffection, or by mono-affective summations of the experience of white masculinity in-crisis.

The rhythmic production of space in Butterworth and Curzon is elementary to the abilities and affiliations inspired therein. Inspiration sees the 'emergence of new possibilities through everyday practices' (Crang: 2001a, p.187); and specifically, in this case, the emergence of new possibilities of social (dis)affiliation (for no guarantees are offered) through the complex practices of masculine sports cultures. Gav and Joe share a friendship, the development of which can neither be reduced to, nor abstracted from, their encounters in rhythmic gym-floor. Where these men occasionally train together, across Burnley's colour-culture line, the rhythms of their bodies come into a relation that takes up and amplifies the movement of inspiration through the sights, sounds, things and meanings of the gym. Yet these gyms and the relationships they enable should be thought of as worlds 'which must be acted into' (Thrift: 2000a, p.217). As noted above, inspiration is not *necessarily* found in them. Nor will it *inevitably* provoke *desirable* social arrangements, whatever those may be.

Rather, a careful management of space, a dutiful temperance of emotions and assiduous management of social arrangements are crucial to learning how to box, build muscle and socialise in Butterworth and Curzon. Sparring requires that fighters learn how to temper their aggression and anticipate their opponent doing so, striking between them the appropriate level of competitive intensity. The layering of dispositions described above, accruing through attunement to the progressively more unpredictable rhythms of bags, pads and opponents, becomes indistinct during sparring. Instinctive memories of the rhythms of

different materials, equipment and people are packed into the virtual body and emerge seamlessly as affective capacities to summon aggression, to take pleasure from landing an accurate punch, to temper anger, etc. Durable affiliations, including ones that bind white and Asian men together, emerge through *capable, cooperative involvement* in a rhythmic gym-floor that each finds inspiring. The lived experience of these affiliations is far removed from attention to the appropriation of raced discourse or faith in rational enlightenment. Reason and representation, abstracted from experience, lack the rhythmic immediacy through which they would take effect.

The affective logics through which practices such as sparring play out, often see rhythmically composite bonds of affection grow between young Asian and young white men. Whilst not subject to rational enlightenment, nor engaged in a negotiation of difference, a logic of affiliation is at work that is reportably less inhibited by the raced differences so ingrained in Burnley's public culture. Where Sid and Hamid learn to spar across the colour-culture line, they are learning to apprehend possibilities for acting and feeling (see McCormack: 2002, Petersson: 2005). They do not become capable of clairvoyance, but rather move closer to the edge of event by incorporating its increasingly familiar refrains into their dispositions; Sid comes to recognise Hamid's feints, prompting Hamid to refine the move, which in turn prompts Sid to refine his anticipation, etc. Learning to anticipate another body and another persona involves having one's own disposition penetrated by the excitement of what might be. A closer attunement is cultivated to minute conventions by which people anticipate 'what will show up where and what will show up next' (Thrift: 2004b, p.176).

Chapter 6 noted Gareth and Tom each taking time to give instruction to Asian newcomers to the gym. As they help them to arrange their bodies, and give them a miniscule amount of assistance to help them reach the end of a set of repetitions, each man is learning to anticipate not only the limits of their own

bodily capacities, but also the limits of the bodily capacities of their contemporaries. Through culturally located conventions of anticipation, young Asian and white men in Butterworth and Curzon develop bonds of affection that complicate the parallel lives thesis and hint at militating against a repeat of the unedifying spectacles of 2001. Chapters 5 and 6 also argued, however, that the collapse of those conventions might well spill over into aggressive confrontations that assume the raced antagonisms that scar Burnley's social politics. Sparring can go wrong. Where young Asian and white men enter into faux combat, there are a host of raced significances that reference the summer of 2001 lurking just beneath the threshold of reportability. No guarantees are available, either way.

It is in response to this radical absence of guarantee that the topographies of inspiration of Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym are *carefully, deliberately managed*. Although race typically goes unspoken, the analysis below contends that it is nonetheless vicariously manipulated within an inspirational infrastructure. These inspirational cultures demand and enable an active engineering (Thrift: 2004a) of conditions conducive to *appropriate expressions* of affective capacity. Numerous, judiciously distributed and interrelated sources of inspiration provide the charging cells of these living, beating, breathing, flexing, sweating, rhythmic topographies. The compositions into which those sources are sorted establish a material and affective circuitry, conducting inspiration and electrifying the production of space on the gym-floor. Training involves having one's affective capacities 'facilitated by a certain infrastructural security, enlivened by the rigging and routing of more than me' (McCormack: 2006, p.332).

In Curzon, there are framed photographs of Gareth tearing out a deadlift whilst surrounded by a baying crowd. In Butterworth, signed pictures of famous fighters are arrayed across walls, alongside trophies, motivational slogans and newspaper cuttings. The sparring ring is placed in the centre of activities.

Construction and maintenance of this inspirational infrastructure is a form of 'bricolage'; a careful, ad hoc management of the production of space by deliberately distributing bodies, artefacts, movements and intensities. Parts may be removed, added or altered, but not all at the same time and not without attention to the 'distinctive efficacy of a working whole made up, variously, of somatic, technological, cultural, and atmospheric elements' (Bennett: 2005, p.447). The addition of a picture here or the removal of a machine there, must be done with care regarding orchestration of the rhythmic topography of inspiration. On entering these gyms for the first time, the inspiration others are finding seems natural, spontaneous. However, the seeming permanence of the inspirational infrastructure masks a careful, ongoing engineering of 'the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle' (Bennett: 2004, p.351).

Engineering inspiration entails both the excitement *and* the ongoing recuperation, within these infrastructures, of the unruly effects of affective capacity. The skilled cultivation of ability, as oppose to its uncomplicated acquisition, is an improvisational response to '[n]on-directional, aleatory trajectories [that] may be cyclical or echo recurring themes but allow a coping with the world' (Crang: 2000, p.194). Sparring does not entail charging young men with aggression and throwing them at one another, although it may appear as such to the uninitiated. Rather, the level of aggression is carefully managed so as to avoid physical injury and prevent ill feeling between club mates, either of which would interrupt the inspirational topography of the gym. Similarly, lifting weights to the point of muscular exhaustion entails a careful calibration of technique, rather than an intemperate lugging of metal. A bodybuilder must learn to identify physical sensations indicative of severe tissue damage, as oppose to intense muscular exhaustion.

Inspired movements, sensations and affects are liable to give rise to unexpected effects, producing messy, surprising complexities (Law and Mol:

2002). Muscles might rupture, nose ridges crack, skipping ropes frustratingly catch on heels or rapport with a contemporary embarrassingly stall. A perpetual threat as such requires that the temperate boxer or bodybuilder continually work to grasp at the 'excessive and distinctly uncertain realms of action' (Harrison: 2002, p.487). When sparring, they must recuperate the emotions and movements that threaten to transgress and ruin the plan for that session, thereby maintaining an affectually strengthening and socially appropriate performance. Training to box and build muscle in Burnley's gyms produces effects 'that must then be accounted for in a never-ending chain of circumstances' (Thrift: 2000a, p.217). Just as Donald disciplines young men whose excitement overflows into disrespectful horseplay, body tissues realign in response to unexpected physical stress. Inspired practice 'pull[s] itself into existence, producing new forms... as it goes' (Thrift: 2004a, p.68), new forms which must be managed if they are not to prove the thread that unravels the whole.

Culturally ingrained pedagogies articulate around these tendencies towards excess. The ongoing production of new and unanticipated events sees a margin for error built into the pedagogical techniques and relationships that add up in these gyms. Chapters 5 and 6 note that teaching young men how to box or build muscle, entails managing a slippage between the intention of the teacher and the thought, sensation, or movement finally stimulated in the student. The uncertainty that pedagogy entails has, indeed, been a push-off point for the emotional literacy and multiple intelligences movements in educational theory (Taylor: 2001, Bowkett: 2007). When learning a movement, such as a technique for lifting a weight, young men may watch their contemporaries for guidance. When learning how to summon aggression, however, similarly reportable guidance as to how one may 'reanimate visceral affective power' (Gormley: 2001, p.169) is harder to come by. Not much may be learnt from an earnestly furrowed brow. The gap between trainer and boxer seemed widest where

inspiration stalled, and the trainer sought to stimulate or the boxer to recover an intense and engrossing experience (see Chaudhuri: 2001).

Each trainer has their own way of approaching this frustration; Donald's quiet gaze, Gerry's energetic gesticulations and Geoff's barked instructions. Teaching people how to 'take up rhythms' (McCormack: 2005, p.119, also 2002) requires skilled calibration of the signifying and asignifying dimensions of communication. Most people will understand the reasoning behind boxing footwork, as weight is distributed so as to improve leverage and maximise power. In the doing, however, it is often said that 'you've either got it or you haven't'; one finally can or cannot sufficiently pull together the unruly strands of what one's body is capable of. Engaging with the limits of one's capacities, through culturally ingrained pedagogies, is in each gym crucial to participating in the achievement of inspired social order. Rationalist notions of anti-racist pedagogy avoid the complications that arise through culture as lived. They thereby excise the inherent mess that culturally ingrained pedagogies entail. Similarly, Cattle's narrative of political progression as a passage from disaffection to self-esteem and confidence, glosses over the complexity of inspiration and pedagogy in contemporary youth cultures.

The engineering of inspiration will always be provisional and only ever incomplete, *precisely because that inspiration is felt by capable individuals and not by uniformly disaffected young men*. The author's experiences of Butterworth ABC entailed a struggle to come to terms with the gym's 'polyrhythmic ensemble' (Crang: 2000, p.150). Seemingly unrelated movements added up to a 'spatial story' (de Certeau: 1984), the arcane threads of which could not be followed by the author, although other people mysteriously could. The gym-floor of Butterworth ABC is a contraction of various objects and practices with distinctive beats of their own; trampling feet; thumping fists; pounding hearts; the metronomic siren; heavy breathing; dance music; skipping ropes flicking against cold concrete; the rolling reverberation and rumbling

adumbration of Geoff's cajoling instructions. Unattuned senses are struck this way and drawn that way, prior to the gaining of an equilibrium that allows one to avoid contracting arrhythmic regions of space around and through one's body (see Elden: 2004, p.195, also see Turetzky: 2002); poolings of disaffection where one slips out of a rhythm to be buffeted its discordant edges.

Over the author's six month period of study, young men who started training in the gym would experience differing progression. Chapter 6 noted that Stefan was soon ready to box competitively for the club. Others, such as Michael, seemed embarrassed by their lack of aptitude, and quickly gave up on attending the gym. By gaining an equilibrium amidst the gym's rhythms, one does not simply acclimatise to that space. Rather, *one gains motile and affective capacities that enable access to the manipulation of space*; one becomes 'ethically capable' of 'affect[ing] these powerful diagrams' (Pettersson: 2005, p.208). A capacity to confidently and competently participate in the production of social order involves contributing not only to a set of reportable rules, but also to the rhythms and refrains that enliven the gym-floor. Lived experiences of learning how to participate in these inspiring cultures, significantly complicate the conceptual legitimacy and political utility of hopes that uniformly disaffected young white men will gain a generic confidence.

Ambitions to place the men using these gyms within oneiric futures, should recognise the role *individuals* play in actively engineering topographies of inspiration. The engineering of inspiration, whether by the gyms' senior figures or otherwise, puts distinctive *characters* into contact with one another, establishing relationships that entail an unpredictable edge of personal *chemistry*. Lorimer (2007) sees *charisma* as a 'congealing of a particular mode of individuation' with a 'specific, enchanting character' (p.915). Indeed, Donald has an uncanny ability to discretely observe young fighters. He manages his physical distance and gaze so as to allow his presence be sensed, vaguely and inspirationally. Similarly, a surge of inspiration follows Gav around the gym as

he squeezes his huge body and prickly persona down the narrow, rubber floored walkways.

The rise of chemistry between certain characters implies a dimension of charisma that specifically marks human social affiliation (Thorpe and Shapin: 2000). Audiences were required by Ronald Regan (Massumi: 2002) and Hitler (Thrift: 2004a). Their capacity to affect people required personalities susceptible to being touched, moved and *persuaded*. The personal chemistry between Gav and Joe, or as seen in the games Kris often plays with the young Asian boy who attends the gym with his father, see Butterworth's inspirational topography subvert Burnley's colour-culture line. Contrastingly, where young Asian men use Curzon's second room, a segregation of inspirational topography is effected. Aspirations for Burnley's future must appreciate that unpredictable dynamics arise where individuals are inspired alongside one another, rather than hastily seek predictable trajectories by which disaffected men may adopt suitable dispositions towards raced diversity in Burnley. Otherwise, those aspirations will fail to take up the opportunity presented, by each and every capable individual, to 'melt... into practices of perception, thinking, art, science, ethics, and politics *without governing them entirely*' (Connolly: 2004, p.511, own emphasis). The greater the gap between the engineering already underway in inspirational youth cultures, and the engineering potentially required to effect visions of social progress, the less likely those visions are to materialise.

1.4 Intercultural bonds of affection and the perpetuation of race

The engineering of rhythmic space within these masculine gym cultures establishes endogenous logics of social interaction. Bodies marked as racially different strike up relations, as inspirational topographies enable their learning to box, build muscle and socialise. As emphasised above, these gyms are not uncomplicated and self contained post-racial oases set amidst a politically turbulent town. Nor, indeed, is the eye-catching masculinity on display a basis for negotiating a post-racial, post-industrial male solidarity. Yet it *can* be

confidently reported that ideas of incompatible racial separateness abroad across Burnley are actively marginalised by the ongoing engineering of inspiration.

In each gym, an understated micro-geography of race is indissociable from the embodied inspiration young men find in these venues. Gav's arrangement with Joe regarding the use of Curzon by Asian men, and the colour-blind meritocracy of Butterworth ABC, each ensure that raced difference typically remains below the threshold of reportability, unable to interrupt the achievement of topographies of inspiration. As such, the eye-catching performances of masculinity on display are in contrast to the subtle suspension and continued latency of race. The political significance of these gyms is rooted in *the dislocation of their endogenous logics of interaction from other logics of interaction found in Burnley*. The inspirational infrastructure of these gyms is engineered to enable affective capacities that sustain durable bonds of affection. As the antagonisms of race are reportably suspended, these bear potential to traverse Burnley's colour-culture line; Gav and Joe's friendship, Yusef training with Darren and Geoff, Hamid and Tank sparring together; the innumerable moments when white and Asian bodies interact genially. The discreet and complicated relationships that these gyms realise between race and inspiration significantly complicate the notion that Burnley's young Asian and white men live parallel lives. Butterworth and Curzon locate particular intercultural encounters, with specific mechanics, in two local contemporary youth cultures. The endogenous logics of interaction in these inspiring places enable a quality and durability of intercultural affiliation absent from Burnley Wood and Daneshouse, and not seen on Manchester Road or at the Peace Garden between the local library and courts.

Intercultural affiliations are possible because of the contrast between the logics of affective relation lived out in Butterworth and Curzon, and the abstract logics of incompatible racial difference that poison Burnley's society. Here, we should

return to Spinoza's account of human understanding, opinion and ideas of race. Whereas Spinoza places a form of intuition at the apex of human capacities of perception, he sees opinion as its nadir. For Spinoza, opinion is an affectively dulled and fictitious way of encountering other people and things. As such we might contrast the unspoken affective understandings young Asian and white men share in the gym with hard-wearing opinions of racial difference. It is tempting to associate Spinoza's specific concept of opinion with a generic account of racial prejudice. Indeed, Spinoza seems to point us in this direction. This thesis has argued, however, the necessity of making a clear and compelling break with an accusative, coercive moral tone in favour of an affirming and persuasive one. Associating prejudice with ignorance, even in the highly sophisticated way that Spinoza allows, would risk reprising assumptions that wickedness is consequent of a poverty of educative encounters with cultural diversity. Chapter 2 suggested that sentiments harden where people feel stalked by superior logics that would 'catch them out'; 'I'm not racist, but...'. Yet abstract assumptions of raced separateness are already confounded by superior logics of more immediate, positively experienced bonds of affection shared within these inspirational topographies. The significance of those bonds is not that they replace deficient understandings of racial difference, but more simply that they put otherwise estranged bodies and personas in contact.

The ethnographies carried out in Butterworth and Curzon note three broad forms of bonds of affection; *empathy*, for instance where senior bodybuilders apprehend the sensation a newcomer feels as he begins to develop tissue awareness, prompting them to pass on advice; *mutual anticipation*, perhaps as young men learn to temper their aggression but also to anticipate that their sparring partner is doing the same; and *trust*, such as where a young man performing a bench press has confidence that his partner will apply the bare requisite amount of assistance, no more and no less, to get him through another repetition. These examples are more particular ones of the kind of bonds of affection that minutely tie together varied affiliations between characters. The

gyms' social arrangements are sustained by a web of interaction, where rules, skills and attitudes finely mix discreet feelings of empathy, trust and mutual anticipation. Where these relations bring young white and young Asian men into affiliation, that possibility cannot be separated from the physical experience of training in these gyms.

There is, however, once again no guarantee that such affiliations will develop. As noted above, inspiration is not an irresistible force of intercultural attraction. The BNP supporters who use Curzon Gym early in the evening will not suddenly deprive fascists of their votes because they occasionally share a gym-floor with young Asian men. Sentiments may be too calcified to allow affection to grow across the colour-culture line within these particular inspirational cultures. Furthermore, where the achievement of inspired social order stalls at Butterworth ABC, perhaps where a young white man feels that he has been shown up by a fellow Asian fighter, a raced sense of separateness might reassert itself, groping along the contours of embarrassed disaffection. Responding to these possibilities by looking for instances where this or that prejudice is melted by inspiration would be a mistake. It would rehearse the tired anti-racist refrain of hunting down and seeking the correction of irrational turpitude. Instead, aspirations for a better Burnley should look first to how the bonds of affection that *do* grow contradict the parallel lives thesis and potentially militate against the antagonism expressed in the 2001 disturbances. The affiliations achieved in these gyms hint at futures hypothecated upon the colloquial inspirations of Burnley's young men, rather than upon supposition of their disaffected torpor.

Within these contexts of encounter, interaction and affiliation, the understated operation of race in Butterworth and Curzon bears significance for Burnley's racial politics. Due to the ongoing moratoria on mentioning race, its organisational effects are often only vaguely tangible and obliquely reportable. Race is usually only glimpsed in the corner of the eye amidst the more

immediate business of punching, lifting or bantering. But it remains latent to everything. A bodybuilder does not become inspired to *then* distribute intensities through his body for this or that purpose; source, duration and effect of inspiration dissolve in the minute interstice where experience becomes irresistible. Similarly, inspiration does not happen and *then* arrogate raced significances. Where Hamid and Sid spar together, the contrast of skin colour does not influence their brutal dance. Neither, however, does their pigmentation change during it. The significance of race remains latent to the inspiration they find in ersatz competition. Inspiration populates 'the cut' (Doel: 1996, p.425), or 'the caesura' (Harrison: 2002) that lies between cause and effect, connecting the being and meaning of these fighting bodies. Hamid and Sid do not selectively forget raced ideas or prejudices when sparring, any more than Donald needs to tell them to forget the events of the summer of 2001 before they begin. *They engage in a non-cognitive logic of encounter where the actualising of race stalls. As rhythms converge to inspire affective capacities, 'a contraction of matter... makes the quality [of space] appear' (Deleuze: 1991, p.26), 'link[ing] instants and interpolating the past in the present' (p.25).* Experiences of inspiration have their own chaotic logic, emerging from but also radically alien to their conditions of emergence. Burnley's raced histories and contemporary politics must, therefore, remain latent to inspiration in these gyms. However, as young men living in Burnley Wood and Daneshouse train together, their inspiration opens onto inhabitations of space amidst Burnley's post-industrial hinterlands that are not marked by a racial cleavage.

Inspired inhabitations of space explicitly unravel the logic of raced separateness that marks public culture and personal experience in Burnley. This is not complete, final or irreversible. Burnley's recent histories of immigration and de-industrialisation are not undone by, but rather undergo reinvention through Curzon's micro-geography of racial segregation. Asian men mostly use the gym late at night and white men mostly use it in the early evening. Yet for a half hour window, usually at around seven thirty, Asian and white men share the gym-

floor. Race goes unspoken as the gym's inspirational power is carefully handed over to the newcomers and intercultural interactions become possible. However, Chapter 6 noted that there were times when this transition effected a break in the achievement of inspired social order, leading to racially discrete topographies of inspiration; changing the radio too quickly, a lapse in gym etiquette or taking weights into a different room. The manner of this precarious arrangement is unique, unrepeatable and utterly germane to Curzon Gym. Much like the grids of roads and terraced streets that separate Burnley Wood and Daneshouse, the gym-floor in Curzon is a striated space (following Deleuze and Guattari: 1988). It is distinctively marked out, gridded and spatialised by diagrams of muscular contours, weightlifting machines, masculine discourses and much more. These diagrams lock intensities into recognisable and navigable configurations of matter, affect and representation; the quadriceps must be *here*, and pass through *this* arc of motion, to eventually grow into *that* shape. When taboos are broken and social order falls away, racial diagrams are ready to step in where scattered sentiments cast around for a foothold.

In contrast to such moments where race interrupts the achievement of inspired social order, experiences of inspiration open onto inhabitations of smooth space. Where this happens, the raced Manichaeism of white/Asian that plays out across Burnley is checked; 'the difference is that chess codes and decodes space, whereas Go proceeds altogether differently... the movement is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure of arrival' (Deleuze and Guattari: 1988, p.353). Inspiration is Go, 'designating a zone of composition, decomposition, and recomposition working below the perceptual and affective thresholds of organised forms and subjective territories' (McCormack: 2007, p.368). As suggested by Chapter 3, however, race is not a simple matter of stricture in zero sum relation to a prior and unfettered freedom. As McCormack (2005) notes, 'it would be wrong to think that the diagram functions solely as a repressive, alienating or containing device' (p.124). Indeed, cultivating affective capacities in Curzon involves

folding apprehensions of the gym-floor into a capable body. As such, there is a continual play between the raced diagrams that lie across Burnley, and the moments where inspiration brings raced bodies into contact. The moments of intercultural affiliation in Curzon Gym are only possible because the gym is, for most of each evening, a racially exclusive place. Intercultural encounters are not possible in spite of cultural difference, but are enabled through the marking of those bodies as different that goes mostly unspoken on the gym-floor.

Burnley's history of race remains deeply constitutive of the possibilities of affective ability and affiliation arising within Curzon's topography of inspiration. Even as it bubbles beneath the threshold of reportability, Burnley's 'past would never be constituted if it did not coexist with the present whose past it is' (Deleuze: 1991, p.59). During the periods where the gym is a site of intercultural cooperation, race remains latent to the achievement of inspired social order. Where an inspirational topography is shared, inspiration unfolds raced diagrams into inhabitations of smooth(er) space. This is not a case of race ceasing to matter because it goes unspoken. Rather, *race goes unspoken as a condition of suppressing antagonism and enabling inspiration, through which race ceases to become matter*, muscles grow in response to inspiration, and so materialise racially unmarked flesh beneath skin and its problematic pigmentation. The young men training together in Curzon learn how to encounter one another's presence in accordance with their own powers of existing. So in order to maintain those positive affective relations, race is managed in a manner conducive to the maintenance of the gym's topography of inspiration. As such, the affective capacities of the young men using Curzon and Butterworth do not easily shrug off the contentious salience of race in Burnley. Rather, their affective capacities are inspired in ways that reinvent the operation of race with unpredictable effects. In a town with raced divisions that so often seem intractable, a measure of unpredictability is a necessary precursor of any meaningful intercultural encounters.

The engineering of inspiration in Butterworth and Curzon does not involve an inclusive nor an egalitarian prerogative. These gyms each have an individualistic ethos, competitive and cooperative to varying degrees. *Specific possibilities of incapacity and disaffection are written in the spaces of the gym-floor.* These discriminate between bodies more and less capable of sparring, lifting weights, bantering, etc.⁷¹ Boxing and bodybuilding demand physical abilities. Yet the development and expression of physical ability is also contingent upon the effects of naturalised ideas of race and gender, which may mitigate the affective capacities of bodies (Tolia-Kelly: 2006). What matters is how processes of discrimination written into these cultures are capable of untangling *congenital* and *contingent* in/capacity. Boxing has, historically, been replete with stereotypes of the innate advantages of black boxers; thick skin, dense bones and flat noses. Yet, as the explicit articulation of race is taboo in Butterworth, Burnley's race problem is thereby prevented from denying individuals with latent ability an opportunity to augment their talent.

As such, attention should be accorded to how race figures in the unruly effects of techniques *intended* to produce 'significantly useful' (Foucault: 1988a, p.154, own emphasis) capable individuals. Raced thinking is excised from the discriminating function of gym practice and from judgements of who has 'it' and who does not. This chapter has, however, also underscored that this meritocratic ethos does not extinguish the latency of race to the achievement of social order at Butterworth. Furthermore, Curzon Gym sees a broad segregation of Asian and white topographies of inspiration, other than for half an hour each evening. This further confuses the distinction between congenital and contingent and between raced and physical capacity; muscles covered in white skin grow in response to the inspiration of music, accents and banter coded as white, whilst muscle covered in Asian skin grows in response to the

⁷¹ The sparring ring is a litmus test of ability. A maelstrom of turbulence where one's feet must be found as rhythms churn together. Dance music pounds. Twenty men trample around the ring. Leather rams your face backwards. Strong lights blaze upon you. You either become *inspired* or suffer the rictal self awareness of *disaffecting* arrhythmia.

inspiration of music, accents and banter coded as Asian. Inspiration can draw differently raced bodies into affective contact. It can also cause them to grow further apart, albeit apparently in the 'same' space.

In summary, intercultural affiliation is possible in these gyms because raced significances brought into the gym are largely suppressed below the threshold of reportability. This enables logics of interaction between inspired individuals that see bonds of affection exorcise race, although never completely nor irreversibly. There remains a danger here of conceiving of inspiration as a 'pure' happening. A force that arrogates effects without itself having form. Such a claim would be worryingly redolent of critiques of the operation of whiteness as a purportedly non-relational power to appropriate representations of difference (Dyer: 1997, Dwyer and Jones: 2000). Recognising the political significance of the topographies of inspiration in Butterworth and Curzon, will require noting that race is, unspoken, at the very heart of engineering these inspirational infrastructures; whether by arranging for Asian men to use the gym late at night, or else by actively writing race out of the development and evaluation of boxing ability. Inspiration does not ameliorate race. The complicated and innumerable personally hurtful events in the years leading up to and following the 2001 disturbances, cannot be left in the changing room alongside the clothes worn in the rest of Burnley. Nor do experiences in the gym cease to be a part of the lives of these young men at the end of each evening. Evaluating how arrangements such as Butterworth's colour-blind meritocracy and Curzon's nightly transition period reinvent Burnley's racial politics, requires a familiarity that can only emerge from prolonged exposure to these inspiring cultures. This form of scrutiny of youth culture and its possibilities is conspicuously missing from, and so may do much to complicate, broad notions of the raced disaffection and parallel lives of Burnley's young men.

2. Valuing ambiguous traditions in complex culture

2.1 Histories of inspiration and the immanence of race

This chapter has followed some entanglements of masculinity, race, ability and affiliation through the achievement of inspired social order in Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym. Foregoing chapters have underscored that these cultural venues are deeply embedded in local and broader histories of de-industrialisation, race, immigration and sport. Chapter 3 discussed the usefulness of a logic of virtuality for understanding the immanence of historical legacies to contemporary cultural practice. Considering such an immanence in relation to these gym cultures will entail thinking about inspiration as open-endedly social, although *not pre-social* (Massumi: 2002, p.9). The immanence of race to culture sees it intimately written into the layering of rhythms that enliven Butterworth and Curzon. Events and inspirations occurring in the past, through and beyond the gym-floor, 'roll over' (Thrift: 2000a, p.216) into contemporary events, inspirations and practices. The 'failed' possibilities of what might-have-been continue to exert gravity upon virtual propensities, effectively 'interpolat[ing] the past in the present' (Deleuze: 1991, p.25). Historical testimonies are deeply embedded in the conditions of possibility of contemporary gym culture. Personal abilities and affiliations unfolding on the gym-floor are pre-populated, or 'haunted' (see Wylie 2007, Edensor: 2005) by what was, what might have been and by what might yet emerge. It is argued, below, that these testimonies perpetually threaten to unpredictably fragment, producing effects that refuse to conform to political guarantees. This irrepressible margin of ambiguity necessitates a careful charting of entanglements of race and inspiration, if these gyms and their unique social arrangements are to feature, positively, in thought on Burnley's future.

Memories are active in Curzon and Butterworth. Past events and absent personas are publicly archived in support of the engineering of topographies of inspiration, constituting an ongoing 'juxtaposition of different temporalities abutting discontinuous moments' (Crang and Travlou: 2001, p.161). Absent

young men, past events and discarded equipment are caught up in the overlapping rhythms of punches, heart beats, repetitions, dance music, skipping ropes, etc. Chapter 5 discussed the significance of the external wall of the changing area that faces out onto the gym-floor in Butterworth. It dominates the iconography of the gym, emanating a tremendous atmospheric gravity. A little over six feet high, it is white but for the gaps in the paintwork and the grime deposited in its grooves. Chunks of brick are missing here and there. The corners are smooth and rounded, as though eroded by the circulation of inspired personalities spraying a wake of intensity against the mortar as they pass. Several dozen trophies sit upon the wall. They are so covered in dust they might reasonably be thought to have grown roots into the stone. Each bears a plaque with a name, along with a note of what the trophy was awarded for. Some are a few years old, others having been awarded thirty years previously. The wall is covered in writing. Names, signatures, at least fifty of them, arrayed below tall, black letters reading 'BOXERS ONLY'. They are written in a variety of colours, each in a distinctive scrawl. Some are illegible and sweeping, others are blocky and precise. Each of them is a living trace of the young individuals who have used the gym and whose personal stories, more than anything else, root Butterworth in Burnley's history and contemporary politics. Rather than sheltering insecure young men, the historical constitution of these gyms provides an affectually variegated and non-deterministic mediation between personal stories and ongoing social change.

Features such as these trophies and names eventually become part of the background scenery of the gym, familiar to and expected by regulars who learn the steadying value of 'what is not marked as 'here', yet palpably still reverberates' (Thrift: 2000a, p.214). Indeed, there is hardly any bare wall space in the long former spinning room that houses the gym-floor. The place is crowded with an iconography that emanates an atmosphere *exceeding the sum of its representational parts*. Framed newspaper cuttings about the achievements of past and present fighters adorn the walls, pasted alongside

signed sketches of celebrated fighters and famous fights and beside posters promoting professional fight cards that featured former members. Gaining a thoroughgoing familiarity with this heavily narrated and personalised place entails a slow burning accrual of intimacy. Places that gather complicated personal histories might not provide immediately accessible sources of inspiration, but rather produce a desultory humming that lends a coherence to the abutting temporalities, moments and objects caught up in the rhythmic construction of space. Growing accustomed to these artefacts does not so much involve being struck as being enchanted by them. In quiet awe of them. A slow burning inspiration marked by momentary immobilisations (Bennett: 2001). Although, as discussed above, race remains latent to interactions possible on the gym-floor, the sense of history encountered in Butterworth is more accessible than an analytical preoccupation with representations of cultural difference might suggest.

Discarded, disused objects are tucked into corners of the gym; beneath tables, stacked around the margins, or else piled precariously high atop lockers; pushed there, battered and exhausted, by lapping waves of intensity spreading from inspired bodies and personalities. Heavy bags, skipping ropes, bag mittens, sparring gloves, hook and jab pads, weight lifting plates. Their unpredictable qualities beaten out of them. They are dead, but still capable of affecting spirits through a tangibly morose splendour. Thick dust covers them. Particles of the flesh of Burnley's young Asian and young white men, now indistinguishably greyish. There are also some artefacts that interrupt this comfortable familiarity, provoking memories 'encountered in the everyday, but not always [as] a recall or reflection of actual experience' (Tolia-Kelly: 2004, p.316). Some signatures on the wall have 'RIP' written beside them. Where these annotations jar experience, inspiration is further imbued with a sense of reverence and an echo of personal loss. When training dips in intensity and a chance is taken to glance around the gym, one might wonder who wore those discarded gloves and shed that skin. 'Gerry Briscoe Nat. Ch.'? 'Pat Patterson

RIP'?. Traces of absent white men dissolve into an ineffable sensing of tradition and legacy. This gets caught up in a topography of inspiration, which opens onto logics of interaction that enable intercultural affiliations in a racially divided town.

The ongoing storying of these characters and events, within these gyms, roots the cultures they host in Burnley's local history. As atmosphere emanates from these artefactual arrays, the presences of people and things are linked with the actions of historical subjects (de Certeau: 1984, p.118). Lived experiences of Burnley have, throughout the existence of these gyms, been carried and written into their inspirational topographies by men living across the town; in Burnley Wood, Rosehill, Daneshouse, Bank Hall, etc. Burnley's former status as an active industrial town shaped popular, local expectations of male employment and leisure. The operation of masculinity and race in these gyms, as reviewed above, emerges from the ongoing layering of multiple personal experiences of Burnley's social and economic history. But the immediate concerns of young men in Burnley's gyms are pedagogical, practical and largely affectually navigated; learning how to fight, build muscle and socialise by contributing to the achievement of an inspiring cultural venue. Where the men in Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym redefine local conceptions of masculine graft (Taylor and Jameson: 1997) or recuperate bygone roles of male employment through leisure activities (Nayak: 2003b), they are not motivated by anxious anticipation of their lot, nor driven to conjure distractions from disaffection or white nostalgia. In living out these youth cultures, they are far too busy navigating rhythms, objects, fragments of space and instruction; ruins of Burnley's and the gym's past that give flight to 'non-directional aleatory trajectories' (Crang: 2001a, p.194), which must be capably recuperated into appropriate expression through emotional temperance. In doing so, *the sum inspirational topographies of these gyms are less racially exclusive than may be suggested by considering the racially coded social provenance of their parts*; pictures of young white former

club members, the gentlemanly code of pugilistic respect, rumours of thick black skin, etc.

The latency of race to Burnley's history, and to the histories of boxing and bodybuilding cultures, is under perpetual, unspoken review in Butterworth and Curzon. The unspoken, yet organisational effect of skin pigmentation, Asian radio stations and Asian boxing style are occasional eruptions through the reportable threshold. These reveal the ongoing latency of race to contemporary cultural topographies of inspiration, and therefore also to capacities to affect, be affected, to temper affects and form bonds of affection. This does not represent an inevitable or predictable cultural narrative of race. Rather, it is an always provisional management and suppression of its reportability that allows artefacts and archives of the gym's and Burnley's histories to contribute to 'a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying' (Deleuze and Guattari: 1986, p.6). But this is fragile. Unpredictable effects may be prompted by; sepia tinted pictures of young white men fighting; the romantically evocative brickwork of a Nineteenth Century textiles mill; the gathering of young Asian men around the skipping mats; the raucous entrance of five or more Asian men at seven thirty, etc. In each case, more or less explicit raced significances may become lost in the cooperative achievement of an inspirational culture; perhaps where a young Asian man finds inspiration in pictures of his white forbears, or where Joe's banter enlivens the tail-end of Gav's work out. Alternatively, race may reassert itself in the disaffected margins where inspiration stalls; perhaps where a young fighter feels shown up by 'that Asian lad' during sparring, or where a radio report about an Asian man running over a young girl poisons the gym's usually humorous atmosphere. Even where Burnley's race problem is seemingly confounded by bonds of affection extending across the colour-culture line, its antagonisms remain latent to these cultures and never too far from the surface.

Intercultural relations are reinvented in these gyms as inspiration drives the evolution of cultural practice. Relationships between the emergence of practice and the management of significance have deep historical roots. Bodybuilding equipment is ergonomically designed in reference to the bundle of possibilities that comprise an anatomy-in-progress which is loaded with masculine significance. Equipment is revised and altered as sensate involvement in countless repetitions suggests new possibilities of muscular exhaustion and growth to the bodybuilder with highly attuned tissue awareness. Contemporary techniques bear what Bergson sees as the 'whole, integral past' (Deleuze: 1991, p.59), coexisting with and being reconstituted by the present (p.61). Viewed over a prolonged period, boxing techniques have changed markedly in the past 100 years. Furthermore, this change has been indissociable from the sport's discursive repositioning. Such innovations as the move from London Prize Ring rules to Queensbury rules in 1867 and the more recent adoptions of heavier gloves and shorter rounds, have coincided with boxing becoming associated less with gentlemanly demonstrations than with aggressive working class culture. However, the 'noble art' remains a means of proving one's masculinity, albeit in an altered class context. Whilst Butterworth ABC is tacitly designed to functionally suppress the salience of race, when following the North West amateur boxing circuit it is striking how many young Asian men mimic the style of Nazeem Hamed; low guard, erratic head movement, leering at an opponent. Furthermore, the crowd often splits along racial lines, notably supporting 'their own' fighters. The inspired reinvention of practice through training and competing acts as a 'groundless ground' (Thrift: 2004a), whereby personal, local and broader historical *contingencies* add up in *non-determinative*, unpredictable configurations. Practices evolve and significances are reinvented, sometimes falling away but always with a propensity towards reassertion.

The continued latency of race to creative praxis underscores the unpredictable riskiness that Massumi ascribes (2002, p.243) to a politics rooted in personal

experimentation. There is no guarantee that the inspiration of affective capacities in Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym will engender bonds of affection at the expense of raced antagonism. The readiness with which white and Asian people support 'their own' fighters on the regional boxing circuit illustrates as much. If the inspiring rhythmic compositions that young men find in the gym, or in the ring, are experienced as something like 'a more concrete, tangible substrate... [if not] a reassuringly substantial immediacy' (McCormack: 2007, p.369), then this substrate is rendered 'impure' by its historical emergence (Lim: 2005). The foregoing and ongoing mixture of race in inspirational culture conditions the practices alive in these gyms as prone to what Hesse (2000) has thought of as 'transruptions' of race, whereby dormant racial refrains are prone to reassertion amidst contemporary culture.

This reassertion may operate through simple, seemingly innocuous practices that nonetheless incubate raced significances; removing the privilege of having a key to the gym from someone suspected of making copies of it; making use of the second room of the gym with one's friends; placing sepia pictures of the aggressively contorted faces of the club's best fighters on the wall of the gym, etc. Where racial refrains re-emerge amidst inspired cultural practice, they 'consist of *giving form to matters*, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy' (Deleuze and Guattari: 1988, p.40, own emphasis). Topographies of inspiration can get snagged upon signifiers of Burnley's politics of race; Asian skin, Bangla music, Islamic robes. Each possibility of raced antagonism in these gyms is inescapably part of the same conditions of cultural emergence whereupon young men establish affective bonds of empathy, trust and anticipation, in bland defiance of the contention that they live parallel lives across a colour-culture line. New possibilities of ability and affiliation are perpetually under threat of the furtive resurgence of familiar refrains of race in Burnley.

Developing an appreciation of the political possibilities that arise where Burnley's young men work out together, does not require an exhaustive power of prediction that might close down political riskiness. Rather, a thoroughgoing intimacy with how race operates through inspirational culture may allow one to provisionally map possibilities of affiliation with broader import for Burnley's race problem. Broad diagnoses of youth disaffection, or else fears for uniformly anxious, nostalgic or angry young white men, are insufficiently nuanced to map those possibilities and dangers. This may be briefly illustrated by noting how the history of practices of skin darkening in Burnley remains bound up in contemporary topographies of inspiration. Many of the competitors of the Mr Calder Valley 2007 competition, at which Gareth competed in April, darkened their skin using tablets, tanning machines and body paints. Competitors with lighter skin seek a tone that will catch the light on stage in just the right way, bringing out the separation and striation of their muscles to maximum dramatic effect. If skin is too light, the body appears to have greater amounts of subcutaneous fat. However, if skin is too dark, then muscular definition becomes harder to discern. The use of skin darkening practices for exciting public shows has a distinctive history. Negro minstrels were a form of entertainment popular in Burnley in the Nineteenth Century. 'Messrs Donovan and Nuthall were applauded in their vocal efforts, and excited the laughter of the audience by the wit of their jokes'.⁷² Those same men, of the St Mary's Amateur Christy Minstrels, were accused of putting 'all one's sentiments to flight'.⁷³

⁷² Burnley Gazette, 17.5.1879

⁷³ Burnley Gazette, 1.11.1979

Figure 10. Skin darkening techniques ⁷⁴



The skin darkening techniques used and the skin tone sought by Burnley's Nineteenth Century minstrels, were very different to those of the competitors at Mr Calder Valley. Whilst practised in disparate cultural contexts, both minstrelsy and bodybuilding see flesh darkened and objectified for the excitement of a crowd. At the Mr Calder Valley competition, the significance of skin colour was marked by judges following an aesthetic scheme that specifically disregards colour as reflective of personal worth, beyond one's success at bodybuilding.

However, as discussed above, an aesthetics practised amidst historically raced, masculine working class cultures will not be one of 'weightless escape' (McCormack: 2002, p.469). A possibility of denuding skin colour of racist connotations will remain troubled by the histories of race latent to British, Lancashire and boxing cultures. The potential value of such alternative regimes of judgment must remain on probation, regarding their capacity to unpick Burnley's materially entrenched and deceptively inevitable racial divisions. The semantic slip between 'darker skin reveals better definition', and 'he only won because he is black', is slight. As is the distinction between noticing a relaxed

⁷⁴ Images available at www.jaycutler.com and at www.concertina.com

boxing style popularised amongst young Asian men by Nazeem Hamed, and deploring the cocky attitude of (*all*) Asian fighters. Yet these margins are the difference between eschewing and exaggerating race as essential to personal ability and worth. Race hangs low over nascent means of valuing what people can do and become that might challenge assumptions that parallel lives are the inevitable expression of a mixed urban polity. Better futures may well be glimpsed in the bonds of affection that traverse Burnley's colour-culture line in these inspirational cultures. Yet these gyms offer no escape from, nor any guarantees against, Burnley's deeply ingrained race problem. This must prompt cautious evaluation of their relationship to Burnley's racial politics, and a scepticism of their suitability to any recipe for local political progress.

2.2 Valuing progress in two complex cultures

The ethnographic studies offered and also the foregoing analysis, illustrate three forms of bonds of affection that may emerge between young Asian and white men in Burnley's gyms; empathy, anticipation and trust. Above, it is argued that these bonds are dependent upon the managed suspension and ongoing latency, rather than a final amelioration, of Burnley's divisive social politics of race. This section concludes the chapter by extending consideration of the complications that will arise where the inspiration of personal ability and social affiliation, in Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym, is valued as presaging a better or worse future for Burnley. It is argued that a tolerance of the political ambiguities of these gym cultures is a necessary precursor to mapping out visions of political progress in which the young men who use these gyms might recognise a role for themselves. The conceptual position set out in Chapter 4, via Spinoza, distanced this thesis from turning to difference as the referent for ethical judgement. This was because the violent exclusions, discriminations and inequalities written into the histories of masculine physical cultures, threatened to see Butterworth and Curzon written off as morally compromised. This would have corroborated an impression that Burnley is populated by disaffected young white men, most notable for their indulgence in riots and racism. This section

contends that exclusions, discriminations and inequalities are inescapably bound up in the inspiration of ability and affiliation in Butterworth and Curzon, just as is the ongoing latency of Burnley's colour-culture line. Both a tolerance of these political ambiguities and a corresponding scepticism of conceptions of political progress are recommended. These will facilitate recognition of the political value of these gyms and enable mapping of how they may feature in Burnley's racial politics.

The empathetic bonds that develop between bodybuilders in Curzon illustrate the complications liable to arise where the significance of these gyms to Burnley's racial politics is assessed. William Connolly (1993) thinks of empathy as 'a pathos of respect across distance'. However, Schrift (2000) argues that, for Connolly, the distance that pathos extends respect across *is* difference (p.156). Chapter 3 moved away from an ethical commitment to difference precisely because it was feared that it would obscure the possibilities of social affiliation enabled within Burnley's male gym cultures. Indeed, there are clearly obstacles to seeing empathy in Curzon as entailing a 'less conditional' *interpretive* framework through which Burnley's young Asian and white men may encounter one another (see Schaap: 2006, p.272). Rather, these masculine and elitist gyms see a rigidly and rigorously established framework of conditionality, which immanently contours and enables intercultural bonds of affection. Indeed, the fleeting cooperative achievement of inspired social order by Asian and white bodybuilders is only possible because of a broader raced segregation of the gym. So the mechanics by which empathy is achieved, between bodies marked as racially different, complicates an interpretation of that empathy as a humanistic understanding in spite of race. In these gym cultures, bodies remain marked and sorted by an admixture of race, gender, class and ability. These gyms do not see the emergence of post-racial identity. Nor do they allow Burnley's young men to put racial difference aside, negotiate or celebrate it. Rather, race is brought into the gym as pigmentation and suppressed by taboo, which allows a tentative sharing in inspirational social

order. This may enable intercultural bonds of affection that dissolve raced divisions, but nonetheless remain haunted by transruptions of race.

Butterworth ABC's reportably colour-blind meritocracy provides a further example of the complications arising where social affiliations are valued as politically promising. Talented fighters, whether Asian or white, are quickly moved into the gym's competitive elite. Where those fighters engage in sparring, they learn complicated skills of mutual anticipation. They not only anticipate one another's moves as opponents, but also temper their own aggression and anticipate that their partner will do so; a precarious affectual balancing act that prevents practice between club mates descending into confrontation. The potential for such arrangements between Asian and white boxers to slip into raced discord is discussed above. Yet even where this bond of affection is successfully established, assessment of its political value is not uncomplicated. Butterworth's ethos of competitive individualism is achieved through a systematic discrimination between more and less capable individuals. The operation of a reportably colour-blind meritocracy does not guarantee against the reassertion of race through sparring. Nor can it absolutely preclude the possibility that Burnley's young Asian men will find a gym mostly filled with aggressive, strong young white men intimidating. Butterworth has no ranging inclusive agenda and is not disposed towards an egalitarian notion of justice. The social arrangements of the gym-floor are hierarchical, marked by inequality and sustained through deference. The young men training in the gym are progressively judged as being more or less capable of participating in a cultural form saturated with a particular masculinity; surly, aggressive and individualistic. This chapter has signalled the possible political significance of the ongoing, fragile separation of contingent (racial) and congenital (physical) incapacities that Butterworth's meritocratic ethos achieves. Affirming this possibility as presaging a better future for Burnley, must also involve valorising the systematic discrimination and exclusion by which it operates.

This thesis ranges against the totemic figure of disaffected young white men, for fear that it will erase capable individuals from thought on Burnley's future. It does not, however, respond with an uncomplicated celebration of what those individuals are capable of. Rather, this chapter recommends cautious evaluation of the political significance of the personal abilities and social affiliations possible in Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym. Those abilities and affiliations might be valued as positive arrangements in Burnley. If so, then that judgment must also celebrate complicated and ambiguous social arrangements, which entail the suppression and exclusion of difference. *Exclusion, discrimination and inequality are infeasibly part of these topographies of inspiration.* Nonetheless, it is through these topographies that Burnley's disaffected young men become capable of sharing affiliations with contemporaries otherwise estranged by the town's politics of race. The raced, gendered and class significances bound up in these inspirational places are not posthumously applied. They do not corrupt a natural default of these young men to associate unproblematically. Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym are irreducibly violent places where vulnerable bodies and feelings are put in harm's way. Bones are fractured, skin ripped, muscles torn, bodies excluded, people discriminated between and spirits disaffected. It would be disingenuous to qualify valorisation of the intercultural affiliations possible in these gyms with regrets that they are not more inclusive; of gender, class, sexuality or indeed of race. Complex culture, and the possibilities they enable, cannot be laid out, surgically dissected, and their independent parts valued on their 'own' merits, which would in any case be pure fictions. A cautious evaluation of the political significance of topographies of inspiration must, therefore, connote a default scepticism of the value judgments layered into visions of social progress. This thesis articulates a scepticism that any better future for Burnley will necessarily entail negotiation or celebration of difference; whether that vision is of social cohesion, a celebration of diversity, or a form of democratic interculturalism, as is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

1. Responding to the research question

This thesis has drawn attention to the possibility of placing colloquial inspirations, and an affirmation of capable individuality, at the heart of aspirations for Burnley's future. Burnley's young white men are unique individuals living out complicated and politically ambiguous muscular-body cultures. They cultivate a variety of culturally located affective capacities, which enable them to form bonds of affection with the handful of Asian contemporaries they share Burnley's gyms with. Those gyms see intercultural affiliations that, whilst not characterised by negotiations of difference or celebrations of diversity, hold promise for Burnley's future. This final chapter speculates that these affiliations open onto an urban politics of race rooted in moral persuasion and so checked by scepticism of visions of social progress; particularly so where these are rooted in positive valuations of difference and plurality. It underscores that where aspirations for Burnley are built around the untold colloquial inspirations and abilities of the town's inhabitants, those individuals will be more likely to find them persuasive.

This concluding chapter summarises progress made in the thesis and looks to the future of the critical trajectories it opens onto. Chapter 1 set out the following research question in response to the broad notion of youth disaffection appearing in the Cattle and Clarke reports.

What are the varied capacities that mark out individuals behind Burnley's disaffected young white men, and how might their enablement through complex gym cultures presage a better future for Burnley's racial politics?

Following the analyses that have gathered momentum in this thesis, a concise response to this question may be offered. In Burnley's gyms, young white men participate in practically complex body-culture. They learn a varied range of capacities to affect, to be affected, to temper their affections and to form bonds of affection with their contemporaries. Reference to disaffection correctly points in the direction of the political capacities of young people. Yet this broad notion is finally insufficient to the affectually varied and somatically located capacities bound up in learning how to box, build muscle and socialise. A propensity for young men to form culturally located bonds of affection with one another is deeply ingrained in the inspirational fabric of Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym. Furthermore, these bonds support social affiliations that traverse Burnley's colour-culture line, even as it is reinvented and the threat of its divisive reassertion ticks-over.

An appreciation of the colloquial inspirations that enable young men and binds them together must powerfully inform aspirations for Burnley's future. Where contemporary inspirational youth cultures are allowed to shape oneiric thought on interculture, Burnley's young white men will be better disposed to being persuaded of its realities and merits. They will be more likely to recognise that they have a positive role to play in Burnley's future. A persuasive account of Burnley's racial politics must carefully negotiate claims upon progressive aspirations with culturally ingrained topographies of inspiration. Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym demonstrate that although relatively durable affiliations between young men often traverse Burnley's colour-culture line, those affiliations remain unpredictable and susceptible to the reassertion of raced separateness. Moreover, they remain predicated upon systematic exclusions, discriminations and inequalities, which reinvent the salience of race, gender and class. As such, these gyms may not, for some, represent the best of all possible societies. However, they host intercultural affiliations, in post-2001 Burnley, upon which disaffected young white men happily confer a title of legitimacy.

2. Development of research themes

2.1 Theme 1: meeting the individuals behind Burnley's disaffected young white men

The thesis unpacks a variety of personal abilities cultivated in complex youth cultures in Burnley's gyms, to which a generic notion of disaffected young white men is insufficient.

Personal abilities mark out the individuals busy training in Burnley's gym cultures. These abilities are too varied, and their political significances too complex, for genuine critical appreciation through a generic figuring of 'disaffected young white men'. Talk of disaffection cannot begin to realise the variety of the capacities of individuals to affect, to be affected, to temper affection and to form bonds of affection with contemporaries.

Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate an enormous range of personal abilities; to move, feel, punch, lift, summon aggression, temper embarrassment, anticipate a sparring partner's aggression, contribute to gym banter, anticipate when a training partner is reaching muscular exhaustion, exhibit deference, etc. This variety is underscored by the practise of these capacities by charismatic individuals with unique personas, each taking up and manipulating the cultural circulation of inspiration in unpredictable ways. The cultivation of these capacities is achieved through specific pedagogical techniques emerging from distinctive social histories to be given style by unique individuals; sparring, deadlifts, working the pads, drop sets, bantering, Gav's instruction and advice, Donald's intense gaze, etc. The innumerable stories of individuals using these gyms are of an irreducible variety and complexity, to which only brief justice is done in this thesis. It is hoped that enough has been done to significantly complicate the ways in which young men may be thought of as competent social practitioners.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 suggested the ambiguous positioning of these capable individuals within Burnley's racial politics. Through the social arrangements achieved in Butterworth and Curzon, young white men become capable of forging bonds of affection with Asian contemporaries. These bonds notably include mutually empathetic, trusting and anticipatory apprehensions prone to realising durable affiliations that confound Burnley's colour-culture line. Where Hamid and Sid spar at Butterworth ABC, they mutually anticipate one another's temperance of aggression, thereby learning to strike a sufficiently, though not too aggressive, atmosphere. When Joe helps Gav complete the final three repetitions of bench presses at Curzon Gym, Gav trusts that Joe knows how to anticipate his muscular failure by reading his movements and facial expressions, allowing Gav to concentrate his energies on summoning the requisite aggression. The affective capacities of, and bonds between, these men are deeply culturally ingrained, complexly rooted in seemingly prosaic, practical minutiae, which nonetheless add up to significant intercultural configurations. These men reinvent and often, although never completely nor finally, dissolve the colour-culture line that falls across Burnley; a line that can seem so intractable in Burnley Wood or Daneshouse.

In unpacking the notion of disaffected young white men, this thesis has contributed to existing literature. Chapter 2 reviewed ethnographic studies that follow lives caught up in transitions to post-industrial urban social-economies. Performances and representations of belonging and identity preoccupy these studies. So too does an ambition to place behaviours within explanatory narratives that link personal transformations with wider social and economic trends. Anoop Nayak and Linda McDowell are prominent amongst those interested in the skills and affiliations of young white men experiencing disenfranchisement from formal employment and politics, and their estrangement from locally settled male roles. Within this context, a closer interest in the affectual has been used to offer a different perspective on how young white men experience urban interculture. A direction not explicitly taken,

hitherto, is that of unpacking the affective variety and instability subsumed by a notion of disaffection. Disaffection is a *specific* affective condition, arising in *complex* cultural contexts to envelope *individuals* where the transmission of inspiration fails. A generic notion of disaffection cannot appreciate white youth cultures in full affectual technicolour.

The inspirational cultures located in Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym mediate between personal transformations and broader urban transitions. These gyms are not uncomplicated, white working class urban fortresses, manned by the desperate and disaffected. The men training and socialising therein are not anxiously sheltering against immigration and social change, looking to their manly muscles and boisterous banter for reassurance. Cattle (2001) favourably contrasts self-esteem and confidence with disaffection, seeing these as prerequisite to the political enfranchisement of young people and to future social cohesion in Burnley. However, the political capacities trained in Butterworth and Curzon are hard to link to a sense of formal enfranchisement. Moreover, the inspiration circulating in these gyms cannot be tidily understood as a passage from white disaffection to liberal literacy.

The conclusions of this thesis contradict hopes that these men will confidently navigate a culturally diverse Burnley; one which history will ineluctably proceed towards, with or without their consent. Burnley's future will be as affectually varied and as politically ambiguous as its past and contemporary urban geographies of race. Yet those of us who abhorred the public disorder of 2001 and regret the continuing racial estrangement of Burnley's constituents, should note that Burnley's gyms are seeing tentative intercultural, interpersonal affiliations in the affectual interstices of cultural trends provoked by global flows of people, money, materials and media. It is untenable to hold that a better Burnley will come to pass where raced disaffection makes way for rational participation in a celebration of diversity. But small gains *are* being made in

reconciling Burnley's parallel lives, even where those gains might least be expected.

2.2 Theme 2: persuading young white men they have a future in a better Burnley

The thesis argues that forming political aspirations for Burnley's future, and for the role young white men may play in it, will require close consideration of how these individuals will find those aspirations persuasive.

Men using Butterworth and Curzon are more likely to find aspirations for Burnley persuasive, where these clearly and compellingly articulate with the inspirational topographies of those gym cultures. The men in these gyms often express dissatisfaction with the political and legal arbitration of interculture in Burnley. The anger expressed in Curzon over the short jail sentence handed to an Asian hit-and-run killer points towards Cantle's and Clarke's fear that young men will feel disenfranchised, holding an *abstract* distrust that 'common sense' will prevail. Yet the gym-floor at Curzon operates through *lived* relations of trust, empathy and anticipation, arising from the cooperative achievement of a regime of somatic common sense. *Opinions* of Burnley's racial politics collide with *understandings* derived from affectually imbued personal relationships. The affiliations shared in these gyms are more immediate than the robust imaginings of irreconcilable difference propped up by segregation and disorder. Chapter 7 depicted these fragile intercultural bonds as haunted by the reassertion of raced separatism where the achievement of inspirational culture is interrupted. Yet their unpredictable, risky immediacy also imbues them with political promise. Affective bonds are a living contradiction of assumptions that Burnley's cultural divide is the inevitable consequence of a racially mixed urban polity.

Superior post-racial logics and representations of raced diversity are alien to these gym cultures. For these to touch sentiments formed during training would require *mediation*, 'opening up' these places up for 'educative' intervention, perhaps anti-racist literature or some form of diversity training. This would fatally disrupt the management of the inspirational topographies that sustain intercultural affiliation in these gyms. The abstract assumptions of raced separateness abroad in Burnley are already and everyday confounded by superior endogenous logics of *immediate* and positively experienced affective bonds. Hopeful critiques of Burnley's racial politics should focus upon affectual affiliations that undercut Burnley's colour-culture line even as they reinvent it. Aspirations for Burnley's future must recognise possibilities of affiliation located in the town's inspirational youth cultures. Young white men caught up in those colloquial inspirations will then be more likely to find them plausible. In turn, those individuals may be more honestly and confidently placed in dreams of urban interculture.

Recommendation of a *persuasive geography of urban race* is a distinctive contribution to critical race studies. Anti-racists have long sought to relate moral recommendation to the lives of young people. This thesis responds to Gilroy's (1998) troubling question of what anti-racists are in favour of, by aspiring to a better functioning urban interculture by taking colloquial inspiration as it is found. Themes of personal and social improvement figure rather opaquely in official hopes for a convivial and diverse Burnley. But treatment of these themes must tolerate both the political promise and ambiguity of inspirational culture. The affectual variety, practical complexity and inherent mess of Burnley's gym cultures are means of bringing people aboard the often too-well-kept ship of intercultural progress.

In response, this thesis focuses upon how the abilities of young white men emerge through *culturally ingrained* pedagogies. Rather than seeking a broad, rational temperance of racial prejudice, it explores the possibilities enabled by

the many temperances that add up in contemporary cultures. It departs from a rational and representation-centric notion of moral pedagogy to appreciate the in-situ cultivation of affective capacities, building upon Nayak's (2003a) well placed call for critical race studies to make use of an empirically rooted sense of pedagogy. Aspirations for Burnley's future should adopt a persuasive, rather than a morally educative, *mode of address*; one attuned to culturally ingrained conventions for anticipating 'what will show up where and what will show up next' (Thrift: 2004b, p.176). We must recognise that individuals are radically able to anticipate the prospects of intercultural from within the cultural conventions they are living out.

Yet we must critically reflect upon the abilities cultivated in contemporary youth cultures, rather than celebrate them in an uncomplicated manner. A focus upon the abilities of young white men must heed Back and Ware's (2002) worry as to whether critical race scholars should 'aspire to empowerment in research when the ethnographic subjects are privileged by their 'race'' (p.49). Instead of championing the empowerment of young white men, this thesis rather more cautiously affirms the cultivation of a carefully limited notion of power by individuals engaged in complex cultures. Chapter 3 developed a notion of personal inspiration that exceeds a notion of agency as restricted or enabled by vectors of difference. Power is not taken to be analogous to an unfettered ability to will, act and impose, but rather to an ability to increase mutual well being in temperate relation to other people and things. In turn, a sense of political capacity has been complicated beyond an ability to celebrate diversity or rationalise (so as to dispel) racial prejudice.

Following Spinoza, young white men in Burnley augment their power of existing through positive and strengthening experiences of other people and things. Their capacities to do so enable their affiliations with Asian contemporaries. Although unpredictable and contingent, these affiliations exhibit durability. One cannot celebrate those affiliations without celebrating the affective and

temperate capacities of young men, white and Asian.⁷⁵ It is not possible to imagine a better functioning intercultural in Burnley without entrusting that future to capable and inspired people. The affective bonds shared by young men have a political value that exceeds that evident in the articulable proceeds of intercultural arbitration. It is not the case that young white men learn to temper prejudice or disaffection through these affiliations. Rather, the affective temperances they practise are multifaceted and deeply ingrained in complex culture. Understanding the range of contemporary temperances underway in Burnley will be key to crafting a popular moral critique of local intercultural.

2.3 Theme 3: negotiating progress with Burnley's contemporary urban geographies of race

The thesis contends that judgments as to what constitutes social progress in Burnley must be tolerant of the ambiguous political significances of the town's contemporary youth cultures.

Aspirations for the future of intercultural in Burnley must be tempered by a scepticism of broad notions of social progress. This thesis has unpacked personal capacities and social possibilities harboured within complex cultures. It has worried that aspirations for intercultural progress formed at a remove from lived experience of Burnley, will occlude modest and desirable arrangements already underway in the town. In short, to appreciate the intercultural potential of these gyms, one must take the rough with the smooth.

The rhythmic composition of inspirational culture in Burnley's gyms is possible only on the basis of systematic discriminations, exclusions and inequalities. The serious training atmosphere of Butterworth ABC is bound up in a surly, independent masculinity. Its cultivation is predicated upon a progressive discrimination between more and less capable bodies. Moreover, whilst a

⁷⁵ As noted in Chapters 5 and 6, this is not equivalent to celebrating abilities that somehow transcend the operation of race in the cultures in which they are inspired.

reportably colour-blind meritocracy omits race from judgments as to the more and less talented, this cannot extinguish the ongoing latency of Burnley's raced divisions. Within this context, discrimination, exclusion and inequality are not pejorative terms, signalling regrettably regressive dimensions of culture. Rather, *they are infeasible elements of these cultures*. They cannot be separated and politically valued by abstract notions of what is or is not progressive. Rather, they must be judged in relation to local political expediency. As such, the intercultural affiliations seen in these gyms are something special in Burnley.

Chapter 1 noted Ahmed's (2004) contention that 'the term 'critical' functions within the academy to differentiate between the good and the bad, the progressive and the conservative, where 'we' always line up with the former' (p.9). The thesis has developed this theme by articulating a conservative political tendency, emerging as a default scepticism of the political utility of aspirations for social progress. This tendency is heedful of the danger that social arrangements, personal abilities and sentiments that do not conform to progressive aspirations must appear to be either staid or regressive; people might fail to exhibit sufficient reason to turn away from prejudice, might not be comfortable in the presence of diversity, or may otherwise fail to qualify for acceptance within a minimum affective consensus.⁷⁶

In building this analysis, the thesis has censured the worries of Cattle and Clarke for the disaffection of young people from the confidence and self-esteem commensurate with a convivial, diverse future. It has criticised a further series of would-be progressive affective dispositions; presumptive generosity before plurality (Connolly: 2002), hope as a response to suffering (Anderson: 2006a, 2006b) and the bearing of witness to openings for alternative, better futures (Dewsbury: 2003). An affective consensus is potentially just as compromised as

⁷⁶ Comfort has recently been valorised in response to its denigration in self consciously fast-paced contemporary culture (Bissell: 2008). Yet comfort might also have a coercive political utility, as a minimum affectual consensus for progressive sentiment whereby the subjects of moral recommendation must be 'comfortable' with ideas or events or else be construed as reactionary and regressive.

a rationalist one, setting exclusive bounds and qualifying standards. Perhaps for the designation 'progressive' to remain a useful part of political debate over Burnley's intercultural future, its substantive meaning must be minimal, functioning to signal the irresolvable task of defining a better future for the town, post-2001. This scepticism is not a reactionary nihilism. Rather, it assumes a commitment to root political aspirations in colloquial inspirations, in preparation for a politics marked by humble ambitions for moral persuasion.

Political aspirations for Burnley should appreciate a *plurality of ethos* rather than an *ethos of plurality*. In order to attune to the colloquial inspiration young men find in Burnley's gyms, those aspirations must apprehend an individualistic ethos of self improvement encrypted by race, gender and class. Ethos is a contingent and ongoing practical achievement, set within complex culture and encompassing a range of affectually imbued attitudes (respect, deference, humour, etc.). Immutable claims upon the progressive quality of a particular ethos of pluralism, liberalism or interculturalism, risk becoming alibis for not engaging with and thereby *abandoning the possibility of persuading* sentiments construed as regressive or abject. Moral proclivities for transgression, diversity, multiplicity or pluralism will find ample opportunity to forge such an alibi in Burnley's exclusive and hierarchical gyms. So how can a colloquial ethos premised upon exclusion, discrimination and inequality participate in an ethos of plurality? The remoteness of Cattle's confident celebrations of diversity from experiences of Burnley's gym cultures bears this problematic, to which the sceptical conservatism of this thesis enables a response.

Headway can be made via the notion of *agonistic* political debate. Mouffe (2002) distrusts a search for *rational political consensus*. She argues that 'the field of the political is not reducible to a rational moral calculus and always requires decisions' (p.140). This thought is reflected in Amin's (2003) question of whether, post-2001, UK public culture 'is capable of sustaining plural demands without prejudice, rather than [asking] whether difference and

disagreement can be sublimated to the imperative of community cohesion' (p.463). Indeed, this imperative of cohesion is familiar from Cattle's and Clarke's hopes for Burnley's future, and omnipresent in mainstream political discourse on urban race issues. In contrast, Connolly (2004) sees a value of agonism in its making room for critical engagements with faiths that may initially lie outside one's beliefs in political progress. He suggests that in order to forge those engagements, it is necessary to bear an 'agonistic respect' towards other faiths, in defiance of 'forces that seek to overwhelm the diversity of life' (p.511).

The political utility of this commitment hinges upon how one defines, identifies and acts towards 'forces that seek to overwhelm the diversity of life'. This political formula threatens an extension of the classically liberal and rational 'if you knew what I knew we would agree'. It may be put as follows; 'if you felt how I felt, we might not agree, but in the tone of our disagreement we would have the basis of a better society'. This *minimum affective consensus* of an agonistic respect for other faiths corroborates the notion that 'violence and antagonism are ineradicable' (Mouffe: 2000, p.139), placing violent and antagonistic people, sentiments or behaviours beyond the political pale of pluralist respect. This is a sophisticated rehearsal of the placement of white racist extremists beyond political rationale after the 2001 disturbances. The effect is a crystallising of the exclusive margins of a political debate, the interior of which is characterised by the possibility of mutual persuasion. The powerfully coercive, normative masculinities manifest in Burnley's gyms, and their ongoing moratoria on articulable raced difference, do not so much overwhelm the diversity of life as rigorously channel it through immanent scripts that close down and exclude difference as the condition of inspiration. Do the young men who find inspiration in these gyms lie within the 'multiplicity of ideas of the good' (ibid.)? Or are their abilities too problematically marked by ineradicable violence? How should one, or indeed could one, persuade them to live otherwise?

Mouffe (2000) frames the problem of 'what to do with this violence' as an ethical question, 'for which there can never be a final solution' (p.139). In response, she suggests a 'never ending interrogation of the political by the ethical' (p.140). Her conclusion is reflected in the function that the Spinozist conception of ethics adopts in this thesis, *placing belief in the progressive under permanent review*. Aspirations for Burnley's future will be more capable of persuasive receipt in Butterworth and Curzon, where conceptions of an affectively charged consensus upon Burnley's future (convivial diversity) and its corresponding abject margins (white disaffection) persist only under restless threat. Mouffe recommends that agonistic debate articulate over an incommensurable left-right axis. This thesis effectively recasts that axis as an articulation between political aspirations and colloquial inspirations.

Developing persuasive political aspirations for Burnley, in which young white men are able see a role for themselves, must, where necessary, stretch this agonistic dynamic as far as possible. Where political aspirations jar with contemporary youth cultures, in the proceeding negotiation political commentators should mimic the temperance exhibited by young men sparring in Butterworth ABC; approaching the point where contestation is utterly divisive without crossing it, and thereby passing into an *antagonistic* and moralistic conflict. Aspirations for Burnley will be as far reaching as the recognition of commentators that 'cautious engagements with other faiths can encourage exercises to fold a layer of relational modesty into the faith that inspires you' (Connolly: 2004, p.511). Regarding Butterworth ABC and Curzon Gym, this modesty would be manifest as a tolerance of the discriminatory and hierarchical social arrangements through which inspiration operates. In order to recognise the political value of interculture in these gyms, a cautious, modest politics must temper the evangelical quality that faith perhaps requires; a deeply personal task for which guidelines will remain elusive. A pluralism that is finally intolerant of monism will only ever find society insufficient to its sensibilities, as will a

politics that is prejudiced against each and every discrimination against difference.

June 2001 saw raced disturbances erupt across Burnley. A divisive colour-culture line remains vividly part of life in the town today. It is sustained by a concatenation of stark racial segregation, deeply rooted material deprivation and the ongoing political legacies of 2001. Nevertheless, this thesis has shown that Burnley has, at the very least, two energetic youth cultures which, although mostly used by young white men, are also used by young Asian men with whom they share bonds of affection. Two such places are already enough to suggest that Cattle's parallel lives thesis is not the full story of the intercultural social arrangements taking and making place in Burnley. There are many, many more. Intercultural affiliations emerge amidst endogenous logics of interaction in Burnley's gym cultures. These affiliations have a political value that exceeds that evident in the articulable proceeds of negotiations of identity and belonging. These gyms see the reinvention and reassertion, but also the undercutting, of Burnley's colour-culture line by durable and complex bonds of affection, growing between men much like those seen fighting on the streets of Burnley Wood and Daneshouse in 2001. These bonds represent small, fragile and politically ambiguous gains that should inform hopes for what Burnley may become.

3. Implications for thought on urban interculture

This thesis has quarrelled with Cattle's position that Burnley's disaffected youth must become capable of celebrating racial diversity. Its political disposition is a thoroughgoing scepticism regarding the utility of uprooted narratives of social progress and rationalist framings of personal improvement. Yet there is a danger married to this innate conservatism, in that demonstration of the complexity of local cultures may be inferred to be politically sufficient, suggesting political paralysis in the face of fragile social arrangements that we dare not touch for fear of unintended consequences. Further studies could, then, only ever present counterpoints to, or provide alibis for withdrawing from,

political aspiration and action. In response, this final section makes four short recommendations for thinking about and doing intercultural urban politics.

Rehabilitating individualism and self improvement

This thesis has made a political virtue of particular individualistic ethos' of self improvement. As such, its positioning emerges from engagements with the culturally located character of Burnley's gyms. A broader intention, however, has been to rehabilitate a sense of individualism as complementary to functioning urban interculture. Critical race studies has often moved around tropes that explore different configurations of human mutuality; Chapter 2 discussed the commonplace exchange of notions of community and multiculturalism. Yet in pursuing and unpacking these themes, we must not miss the political value of places, practices and moments wherein people work for their own betterment, perhaps without intending or exhibiting conspicuous contribution to a common social fund. Burnley's gyms are full of such individuals, and these places work as intercultural hubs by corollary rather than by design. We must retain an ability to recognise the political merit of inspired individualism. A will to self improvement is not reducible to the brash individualism often identified with Western cultures, nor indeed to the glossy marketing of fitness industries.

Furthermore, and contra popular conceptions of multiculturalism, Burnley's gyms do not see the negotiation and celebration of abutting cultural fealties. These gyms are not, each in their own right, 'capable of supporting plural and conflicting rights claims and... ready to negotiate diversity through a vigorous but democratic clash between equals' (Amin: 2003, p.463). Rather, their political potential (and ambiguity) is premised upon connections made possible below the radar of a representation-mediated politics of culture, identity and belonging. In Butterworth ABC, a meritocratic ethos relies upon a working moratorium on mentioning raced cultural difference. Affiliations develop between young Asian and white men just as race goes unspoken, remaining unresolved and liable to

divisive reassertion. Curzon Gym does not see a celebration or negotiation of diversity. Rather, it realises a genial intercultural truce manifest as a micro-geography of racial segregation and underpinned by individualistic endeavour. The functioning of interculture may be missed were one to begin with the question, 'how do white and Asian men mix and coexist in Burnley?'

Temperance in fragile contexts of inspiration

The inspired individualism realised in Burnley's gyms is not the inevitable and unruly expression of an irrepressible vitality. Rather, interculture operates through the ongoing achievement of temperate affectual existences, carved out by young men amidst an inspirational culture that requires careful and collaborative engineering. Understanding of how people learn to live together requires appreciation of the ability of individuals to sustain a dialogue with, and cultivate their own propensities for, feeling. Such an ability is the soul of a temperate existence. Moreover, this lesson should be extended beyond the body cultures explored in this thesis. An explicit focus upon disciplining the body will be less obvious and significant elsewhere in the town; in Burnley's pubs, churches, reading groups, etc. However, a form of inspiration will nonetheless circulate in each of these venues, with distinctive rhythms and tones of feeling. Future studies may explore how that circulation is engineered and tempered where everyday skilled practitioners are brought into relation in varied situations.

Temperance is not abstinence from the thrill of inspiration. Nor is it mere continence, setting one's face against unbridled stimulation. A temperate social practitioner learns to enrich and sustain the fragile rhythms of inspired social order. Amin (2002) has highlighted sports associations as 'spaces of intense and passionate interaction, with success often dependent upon collaboration and group effort, their rhythms are different from those of daily habits, and they can disrupt racial and ethnic stereotypes as excellence often draws upon talents and skills that are not racially or ethnically confined' (p.970). Indeed, Burnley's

gyms situate topographies of inspiration able to contradict the town's divisions, enabling bonds of affection between young Asian and white men. Despite the regularity and repetition of the practices these gyms emplace, the inspiration found therein makes it difficult to think of them as venues of the prosaic. Inspiration is only ever experienced as *singular, exceptional and unpredictable*. Otherwise it is not inspiration, but rather a trace of it. The functioning of interculture may require that temperate individuals maintain an inspirational infrastructure of things, people, practice and rhythm, across ethnic divisions.

How inspirations add up in Burnley

Limitations and shortcomings hem in the vision of intercultural politics set out in this thesis. The author made a choice to study young white men busy boxing and bodybuilding, for a number of reasons. Burnley's gyms enable a response to Cattle's report, whilst presenting an opportunity to rebut stereotypes of aggressive, working class young white men. Just as significantly, these topics reflect the author's long standing familiarity with and enjoyment of these sports. The presentation of a male-centred view of Burnley does not, however, impute a masculine manifesto for the town's racial politics. Not everybody in Burnley will find stories about boxing inspiring. Indeed, residents of Burnley Wood and Daneshouse have any number of interests and know any number of places in and beyond Burnley. This research might be extended to other groups in Burnley and to other kinds of activities, including faith or arts groups, which sustain markedly different inspirational topographies. This might see use of varied conceptual and methodological tools, just as the approach taken by this study reflects the task of examining somatic inspiration in masculine cultures.

In each gym, a superficial and provisional suspension of raced difference allows fragile bonds of affection to undercut Burnley's colour-culture line. Neither gym sees a 'clash between equals'. Rather, they each realise arrangements engineered by the authorised personalities of charismatic, white, middle-aged and working class men. The particularity of this analysis does not, however,

preclude these gyms featuring in a broader analysis of urban politics that negotiates contentious difference in a town that mixes industrial heritage, Islamic headscarfs, Burnley F.C. and halal meat. The men who train in Butterworth and Curzon live out any number of places and share relationships across the town. Whilst questions of cultural difference are not worked through in situ, the experiences men have of these gyms may take a more vicarious influence on negotiations of difference. They carry memories and sentiments traced in the gym into places where difference may be more directly and openly addressed. Future research might explore how experiences of these gyms operate through personal connections across and beyond Burnley. A suitable methodology would focus upon particular individuals, involving personal reflections by respondents upon how the inspiration they find at the gym integrates with their wider lives.

Letting be

This section has impressed that the fragility of interculture need not frame political intervention as impossible, nor as unnecessary. Nonetheless, it will take a degree of courage to recognise that there may be times when the only way to cherish interculture is to let it be. Crude interventions in cultural topographies of inspiration would disrupt the very rhythms that enable intercultural affiliation. New techniques of activism or policy implementation, which would tap the intercultural dynamics of inspirational infrastructures, must also leave these intact. Future research should work toward an urban politics with only the lightest, most chary touch.

Such a politics must recognise that there is no model for a politics capable of capitalising upon colloquial inspirations, and so must pay careful attention to the particularities of cultural venues. Charismatic figures represent powerful stakeholders regarding the political potential of these cultures. The trainers at Butterworth ABC are conscious of the club as a vehicle for social good. They ensure that learning a certain respectful, independent masculinity is integral to

enjoying success at the gym. Donald and Gerry often comment that 'the kids come first', 'it's for the kids'. Yet Butterworth ABC is perpetually short of money and publicity. If it were decided that the club realises a degree and form of intercultural contact beneficial to Burnley's future, financial support and promotional assistance would ensure that it remains a feature of the town's social geography. This might also encourage the expansion of the gym, or the opening of similar gyms.

In contrast, Gav runs Curzon as half business, half social club. It is the retirement project of a former professional, rather than a growing business or an amateur club looking to expand. The tightly bonded peer group that runs Curzon would, in the author's judgment, be unenthusiastic about an opportunity to expand the business. The intercultural affiliations achieved at the gym emerge from a small cast of regulars who gravitate around an even smaller cast of charismatic authority figures. Curzon is one case where it might be necessary to make a judgment to resist the temptation to engage with a politically promising topography of inspiration, for fear of disrupting what is valued about it. If political action *is* to be taken to support cultures that enable intercultural affiliation, then that support must have the loosest of strings attached. It should not be seen as an opportunity to mould them into a purportedly more progressive, though perhaps finally unworkable, image.

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