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That spatial shit:
Exploring the space between actor training and training to play rugby union

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ABSTRACT

It is sometimes argued, albeit anecdotally, that performing artists and sports practitioners have certain basic things in common when it comes to the goals and methods of training for their respective professions: discipline, focus, care of the body. However, in the case of actor training and training to play rugby union football—the two practices with which this thesis is concerned—it is also clear that arts and sports training take place within vastly different cultural contexts. Each of these fields of practice has its own set of expectations about the performative outcomes that training should support. Each acculturates quite specific bodily habits and values. On the one hand, actors are encouraged to explore a subtle form of embodiment, one that 'awakens all the senses' (Bogart 2005: 20) creating an openness to a variety of psychophysical demands. In contrast, a key concern of rugby union players is to be fitter, faster, stronger, and thus, techniques of the body (Mauss 1973) are shaped to reflect the requirements of the sport. Yet, although rugby union is a physically tough collision sport, there are chaotic elements of the game that require players to exploit a more intuitive set of bodily dispositions; ones that are not developed within regular rugby union training regimes. Hence the question arises, what if anything, might a rugby union player learn from being exposed to forms of actor training? And on what terms could an interaction between these different training regimes occur?

These questions are pursued in this thesis. Beginning with an account of a pilot workshop with the Australian national rugby union team (the Wallabies), the research moves into an in-depth case study conducted over two seasons with the players and coaches of the Under 20s (Colts) team from Sydney University Rugby Football club. The research took an ethnographic approach to document and analyse current training methods and match-day strategies. The fieldwork also included, in the intervening period between seasons one and two, a series of twenty action research workshops with thirty of the Colts players. The workshops were focussed on adapting actor movement training techniques (inspired by Anne Bogart's Viewpoints) as an ancillary training method for elite rugby union players. The ethnographic materials

and observational data gathered during the research are interpreted using a framework drawn from sociology (particularly the work of Pierre Bourdieu) and theories of embodiment (drawing on thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone).

From the players' perspectives, there was considerable interest in and openness towards further development of the methods used in the workshops as a possible complement to their regular training regime. None the less, the thesis acknowledges there are factors within the field of rugby union that can constrain attempts to develop genuinely interdisciplinary training techniques such as those proposed here. This research also brings to light the ways in which prior bodily knowledge, such as that acquired through the players' regular training, both enables and inhibits the acquisition of new bodily skills. Finally, in exploring the space between actor training and training to play rugby union, this thesis raises larger questions about the possibilities of crossover training between many other disciplines.

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heaven'.

Finally my upmost gratitude and love must go to my family and friends in particular my husband David Moss and children Eleanor, Erik and Oliver whose unerring support and encouragement has seen this project through to completion and Sandra Harrison who very generously used her linguistic expertise to read and comment on my work.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

This thesis is my original work and contains no material previously published or written by another except where due reference has been given. The content of the thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my Master of Arts research degree at the University of Sydney. Some parts of this research have been presented at conferences and published during the process.

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PROLOGUE: Pre-Game

A warm, bright, sunny autumn afternoon. My husband and I walk through the turnstiles, pay our money and head to the grandstand. We know where to sit. This week it is a home game. My husband greets a number of rotund men on the way who make comments about the odds for today's match. 'If they pass the ball,' says one. 'They've got Gordy back, he'll make a difference,' says another. We climb the stairs to the stand and find a position that allows uninterrupted views of both ends of the field. We are here to watch the Second Grade team's game, so the crowd is still rather thin. I say hello to a few other parents who, like us, have come to support their son. I watch as a bagpiper walks onto the field and my husband reminds me that the Gordon Club has Scottish origins. Behind the piper is a line of yellow, green and white jersey-wearing young men who form a tunnel from the gap in the fence to the white boundary line of the field. The line is a form of ritual: the lower-Grade teams at the end of their game clap the higher Grade teams onto the field for the next game as if their claps, cheers and pats will provide the winning touch. The piper intones 'Scotland the Brave' as, out of the tunnel, jog fifteen young men wearing the same green, white and yellow jersey: large boys, skinny boys, boys with defined muscles, boys with tape around their head or legs or arms, injured already but soldiering on. The small crowd claps and cheers, urging their team to success. The players wait in the middle of the pitch eyeing their opposition as they enter the field through their own tunnel, this time, unaccompanied by the discordant sound of the bagpipes. Handshakes are exchanged in the middle of the field. The players take their positions, the referee blows the whistle and the game begins. (12 May 2012)[1]

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[1] All fieldnotes are written in italics and are in the present tense.

CHAPTER ONE: The Game Begins

1.1   An introduction

I became a rugby spectator when my sons discovered the game in the early part of their primary school years. I had played team sports throughout my own school years so thought that playing a team sport was an important aspect of growing up. I had also been told on numerous occasions by my father, who had been a First Grade player, that rugby was a 'good game for boys – it'd teach them about life'.

Saturday mornings were spent traipsing across Sydney to support one or both of the boys. I stood by the sideline and listened dutifully (not without interest) while a squad of rugby dads, all former players, coached me on the finer points of the game. I soon learnt the meaning of a knock-on, a lineout and the significance of the various numbers on the players' backs. That being said, I would often turn away when the tackling was too close to my sideline position or players were being squashed at the bottom of a ruck.[2] Nevertheless, I came to enjoy the many facets of the game, and would jump at the opportunity of watching a professional match, live or televised. However, the more I watched, the more I pondered the frustrated cries from the spectators: 'Find the space!' 'Run the ball!' 'Get it wide!' 'Keep the momentum!' 'Spread out!' 'Too flat!' 'Where's the support?' 'Not THAT move again!' Even allowing for the fact that the game is always easier to 'read' from the safety of the grandstand, it did intrigue me that players were so often failing to exploit the potential space available to them, that opportunities were squandered through bad timing or poor vision, and that players would stick doggedly to set moves of limited efficacy rather than 'playing in the moment'.

A drama teacher by profession, I had been introduced to Anne Bogart's Viewpoints[3] training in 2009, through my collaboration with choreographer Samantha Chester. I was struck by how my secondary level students immediately responded to the training,

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[2] A ruck is formed when the ball is on the ground and two or more players make contact over the ball. Hands cannot be used to gain possession. Players must use their feet to ruck the ball backwards towards their team.

[3] Viewpoints will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

experimenting with space and tempo, as they responded kinesthetically to others in the room. Appreciating the structured yet apparently limitless potential to create movement on stage, I enrolled in a number of Viewpoints workshops to develop my own grasp of the techniques. My interest was particularly piqued by the concept of, and the techniques related to, 'soft focus' as a means for training peripheral vision. I began using Viewpoints in my teaching, both as a tool for encouraging teamwork and as a starting point for devising. Although the concepts of time and space, the building blocks of Viewpoints, were not new to my practice, the physical language of Viewpoints appeared to make the concepts accessible to my students. I became something of a Viewpoints disciple.

Back at the rugby games, the players on both sides were still missing opportunities and often not functioning as a team. There were of course moments of brilliance when a player, dancelike, navigated his way through the defensive line. These gripping moments represent, as rugby journalist Will Greenwood (2012) describes, an amalgam of, 'vision, moving parts, risk, ideology, themes, dreams and hope'. It is the style of rugby that the crowd, the players and the coaches love. It is the style of rugby that I hoped to see every time I watched a match. It is the style that makes rugby distinctive and when it is missing the game is dull. Why then are so few teams able to consistently achieve this holy grail of rugby playing?

Anne Bogart and Tina Landau make a fleeting, tantalising analogy between sport and Viewpoints, arguing that both involve the kind of play young children engage in:

> that of reacting to something that happens in a spontaneous fashion, without self-consciousness, judgment or hesitation. In sports, we once again witness the lessons of Viewpoints in action. We continue to learn about the timeless art of taking what is given you (whether a ground ball,[4] a toy figure or a sudden move onstage) and out of it, making something wonderful. (2005: 209)

This assertion by Bogart and Landau, nonetheless, seemed too loose and over-generalised. It certainly did not match with my observations of rugby union games. The games I had witnessed were far removed from players 'taking what is given to you'. In fact, the opposite was happening, with players holding tightly onto patterns of play. The

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[4] A ground ball is a baseball term for a batted ball that rolls or bounces along the ground.

play in rugby union matches appeared to be the antithesis of the lessons of Viewpoints training.

Some questions began percolating. If high school students and non-actors similar to myself could discover a deeper understanding of the possibilities of space and time when involved in Viewpoints training, could rugby players access a similar experience? Could the rugby players learn to 'take what was in front of them'? Could Viewpoints training enhance rugby players' ability to be 'in the zone', a state regularly achieved in Viewpoints training? Could it help develop a cohesive team? Could the players learn to 'respond, raise the necessity ... go in any direction, in any way, at any speed' (de Quincey 2010: 2) as performers are trained to do? How might this style of training develop the players' spatial awareness, intuition, decision-making and risk-taking capabilities? Could another dimension of embodiment be added to speed, strength and agility? Could the players learn to 'make sense of the chaotic ebb and flow of action that unfolds during the game' (Piltz 2004: 79)?

1.2   Ideas into action

In 2010 I had an unanticipated introduction to Robbie Deans, then Head Coach of the Wallabies, the National Australian rugby union team. During our discussion, I mentioned my idea of using an actor training methodology with rugby players to enhance team cohesion, spatial awareness and peripheral vision. Further discussions ensued with the end result being the unprecedented opportunity of trialling the actor training with the Wallabies team.[5]

Being still a novice Viewpoints practitioner I enlisted the support of Viewpoints trainer Samantha Chester. I was confident that we were going to walk into the rugby union world and create magic. Naively, I had not foreseen any barrier between the field of rugby union and the field of performance because the training method we were bringing with us was non-verbal, requiring only bodies and space, rather than any 'traditional' acting

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[5] These pilot workshops, which are briefly described below, took place before I embarked upon a research degree.

skills. The players' initial reaction was skeptical and bordering on disinterest, as the following field note highlights:

> *Walk in – this time, no massage tables. Half an open space the rest of the room strewn with bags, boxes, water bottles, chairs. Set up the music. Wait. Players begin drifting in; some look at us, most ignore. One asks if there is going to be more of the running in circles. I say yes. He doesn't look too impressed. Robbie comes in and asks the players to move the chairs and other stuff – we have an open space. Sam invites the players to form a circle and goes over the purpose of the training: that of developing a heightened sensory awareness. She reiterates the need for commitment and an open mind. The players begin the task of walking in a line – their commitment is weak and their discipline poor. It could be that they are bored or disinterested. It could be that they are out of their comfort zone. It could be that they are just not able to be in the moment. Sam asks them to think about what they have to do to ensure the line is held. One player makes the comment that he is much faster than the others – she points out that he may have to slow down.* (23 June 2010)

Reflecting on this fieldnote, I see clearly that I had expectations of the training. I made assumptions about the players and the space. What I now know, but had greatly underestimated at the time, was that although the language of Viewpoints was meant to create a shared language, it was not a language that made much sense within the world of rugby union. Samantha and I were outsiders (and not only because we were women). It became abundantly clear that, although we had an understanding of the game of rugby union—after all we knew what the numbers on the back of the players represented, we knew how many points were awarded for tries and goals, we knew that tackling was physically brutal and ball passing was an essential skill—ours was a view from the match day sideline. We had minimal knowledge of the internal workings of a rugby union team in their day-to-day training environment.

At each session[6] the players became less hostile and in the course of the workshops there were a few occasions when players exclaimed 'We felt it!' One moment in particular caught a group of players and myself by surprise. The players had been broken into smaller groups and I was attempting a group clap with one of these groups, not technically a Viewpoints exercise, but one with a similar aim: that of producing a group consensus. The players invited me into the circle, and we stood, bodies alert, focused, listening, waiting for the moment ... and it happened: we clapped and jumped simultaneously. A cheer erupted and one of the players called out 'I just felt electricity!' That instant was, indeed, electric. The players converted? The next week's training session demonstrated that they certainly were not, reverting to amused disinterest, but the moment of spark had proved, to my own satisfaction, that a form of training that heightened kinesthetic and spatial awareness was a concept worth exploring. If there could be one spark, perhaps there could be more.

However, what the experiment with the Wallabies also highlighted was the cultural differences between the field[7] of rugby union and that of performance. If I was to test more fully the premise that a Viewpoints-inspired training could be a beneficial addendum to rugby union training then more than a sideline perspective was required. I needed to develop an understanding of how the players trained, why they trained as they did, how this training transferred onto the field and what input the players had to the training or the match.

I approached a variety of rugby union clubs in the hope they would allow me to observe current training practices and to conduct a series of Viewpoints-inspired workshops with their players. The Sydney University Rugby Club, a dominant club in the city competition and a nursery for future state and national representatives, agreed. I was granted permission to observe the Under 20s (the 'Colts') — a group of highly motivated rugby

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[6] Samantha and I conducted a total of 10 x 30 minute sessions over a period of three months.

[7] 'Field' is used here in a Bourdieuian, sociological sense, namely a 'field of forces' (Bourdieu1993: 30) in which, within the boundaries, particular rules, rituals, regulations are adhered to but in which there is also a struggle between agents to improve their position within the field. However, it is worth noting that Bourdieu, himself, was a rugby player and sometimes deliberately uses the sporting field as an analogy for the competition within social fields.

union players—as they trained and played competitive matches, and to run a series of workshops with thirty of the elite players from the Colts' First Grade squad.

1.3   Tactical approach

The thesis, therefore, has two research components, observations of current training and exploratory workshops, each requiring a different methodological approach. For the first, in order to gain an understanding of existing rugby union training, the observations were conducted as a form of ethnographic immersion: I stood as an observer two nights a week (in all weather) throughout the 2012 club rugby union training season and the 2013 pre-season training. A framework drawn from sociology—particularly the work of Pierre Bourdieu—was used to analyse and interpret the observational data. For the second component of the research, I borrowed from action research models and theories of embodiment (such as those of Merleau-Ponty and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone), to unpack 20 x 45-minute Viewpoints-inspired workshops, conducted primarily between January and April 2013 and held for the most part in a drama studio.

Within the field of performance studies, particularly in the study of rehearsal practices, ethnography has become an increasingly valuable research tool. Gay McAuley makes the point that

> [t]he task of the rehearsal analyst, like that of the ethnographer in the field, involves careful observation of the minutiae that constitute the life and work processes of the group being studied and an attempt to understand what the details observed mean to the people involved and in the broader cultural context. (2008: 286)

James Clifford suggests that 'as a means for producing knowledge from an intense, intersubjective engagement, the practice of ethnography retains a certain exemplary status' (1983: 119).

Over the last ten years, ethnography has also become a growing discipline in the field of sport.[8] Wacquant (1995, 2004b, 2006), Crossley (2004), Spencer (2009), Howe (2001)

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[8] For a detailed review of ethnography and sports studies see *Sporting Ethnography: Philosophy, Methodology and Reflection* Michael L Silk, 2005*; Sport Ethnography,* Robert R. Sands, 2002; *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 1997, 14: 4.

and Thorpe (2011), all employ an ethnographic approach as a means of deciphering the embodied practices embedded in specific sporting worlds. Ethnography, Thorpe proposes, brings social theory to life 'making social theories and concepts more accessible' (2011: 3). All make the point that there is a potential for the ethnographic process to break down, dissect, question, re-evaluate, reformulate the way specific social worlds 'invest, shape and deploy human bodies' (Wacquant 1995: 5).

I am not a rugby union player and never will be. I understand that, as an observer, I am not having the same bodily experience as the players and coaches. I am aware that I was only 'hanging out on the sideline' during the many months of fieldwork (for my own safety I needed to keep a certain distance), not part of the training. Nevertheless, I would argue that I was still corporeally engaged in the research. Conquergood (1991) and Clifford (1988) both highlight the inherently embodied nature of ethnography. As my fieldnotes in Chapter Three will reflect, I experienced the rain, the cold, the sounds, the looming darkness. I saw the sweat, the muscles activated, the grimaces of pain, the looks of disappointment or excitement. I was greeted by the players and the coaches and engaged in frequent sideline chats. I experienced the training 'at a bodily as well as an intellectual level' (Clifford 1983: 119). Hastrup describes this process as being a 'double agent' (1997: 357), whereby the ethnographer has to be both present in the same time and space and able to draw back, to observe carefully, and acknowledge the 'complexity of the phenomena under study and attempt to come to a richer understanding of these phenomena' (Jorgenson 2009: 78).

Conquergood argues emphatically that the recognition of coevalness in fieldwork moves it from 'monologue to dialogue' (1991: 182); that by speaking, listening and being involved in a shared moment, there is an opportunity to gain great insights into those being observed. Hastrup concurs with this concept, writing '[i]t is through the events, whether in speech or action, that we learn about the world' (1990: 49). It is in this way that ethnography became, for me, an analytical toolkit with which to 'uncover the conceptual structures' (Geertz 1973: 27) of rugby union training.

Throughout the Viewpoints-inspired workshops my role was more complex: facilitator, observer, and on a number of occasions, participant. This is not entirely unfamiliar territory for me; in drama classes and rehearsals I continually swing between facilitation, participation and observation. Workshopping, in performance terms, may be conceived as a spiral where experimentation and analysis are entwined; informing, influencing and transforming the next stage. It is a group and personal journey, where individual and collective practices are questioned, re-evaluated or confirmed. Lewin's description of action research as 'a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action' (1946: 38) aptly matches this process and that in which the players and I were engaged throughout the workshops. Although not working towards a creative outcome, the conceptual framework was the same. Each workshop was a co-inquiry, in which new knowledge and insights were gained through partnership in the process (Huang 2010). However, unlike action research, it was not my intention for the Viewpoints-inspired training to supersede or create immediate change in current rugby training practices. Rather, the aim was to determine the potential, or not, for the two training practices to work in tandem. Similar to the ethnographic fieldwork, the workshops reveal some of the complexities of meaning making both on the 'bodily as well as intellectual level' (Clifford1983: 119).

Although two diverse research tasks, they were not mutually exclusive. The different perspectives provided a multitude of information about the rugby players; information that would not have been attained had I only conducted the ethnographic immersion or the workshops. In sum, it was the inter-play between the rugby training and the Viewpoints-inspired training that informed the other; forcing shifts, re-examinations, reassessments of knowledge and understanding.

1.4   A note on training

As I am investigating training practices, it is worthwhile considering two specific notions about training that are relevant to this thesis. Firstly, there is the concept of training as a method that 'transform[s] and improve[s] the body' (Foucault 1979: 136) and 'extend[s] the body's capacity and usefulness' (John Hargreaves 1986: 215) in order to create an

'efficient, practiced and competent body' (Mauss 1979: 105). Second, there is the notion of training as a set of practices 'fashioned in a particular environment for a particular set of performative expectations' (Zarrilli 1995: 72), thereby acculturating habits and values within that specific training field.

With this in mind, and my particular focus on sports training, various studies on boxing (Wacquant 1995, 2004b, 2006), martial arts (Spencer 2009), snowboarding (Thorpe 2011), circuit training (Crossley 2004), rugby union (Light 2001, Light and Evans 2010, 2011), running and scuba diving (Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2010) have provided a point of reference through which to analyse the training regimes of the Colts team. Each author clearly articulates the premise that training embeds both values and body techniques in individuals, 'transcend[ing] the existing repertoire of habits' (Crossley 2004: 52) and allowing a '(re)socialised lived body' (Wacquant 1995: 88) that 'slips beyond conscious reflection in the actual *doing*' (Sparkes and Smith 2012: 172 italics original) to allow participants to function legitimately within a specific sporting field.

As with sport, the field of aesthetic performance has a multiplicity of forms that require particular kinds of embodied practices and their own specific training methods. As Zarrilli notes:

> Every time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a 'theory' of acting – a set of assumptions about the conventions and style which guide his or her performance, the structure of actions which he or she performs, the shape that those actions take (as a character, role, or sequence of actions as in some performance art), and the relationship with the audience. (Zarrilli 1995: 4)

Although training regimes are developed to instil in participants a practical understanding of a particular activity, research has on the whole been field-specific. Studies based around the skill acquisition and embodiment in boxing, snowboarding, running, martial arts, acting, dance and movement are bounded by experiences from within each field and as such, is viewed from a relatively narrow perspective. Being at the centre of a particular field '[...] gives life to a specific form of interest, a specific *illusio*, as tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 117). In other words, 'our vision is narrowed down to a preconceived series of possibilities' (Bogart 1995: 31).

A core issue, then, is to ask whether a given form of training might limit the possibilities for embodiment by virtue of developing the techniques thought to be applicable to a very specific set of outcomes? Do assumptions with in a field, as Bourdieu and Wacquant propose, cause a failure to recognise the 'complexities within that world' (1992: 127)? What would occur if taken-for-granted suppositions about training practices were challenged, by borrowing from outside a field? What new knowledge would be opened up? More specifically, could my observations about the manner in which rugby union players play the game, and the notion that actor movement training may develop other attributes, present another lens with which players and coaches can view their sport?

These questions could obviously be relevant to many case studies. Interestingly, with the exception of the pioneering work of Janet Hamburg (1992, 1995), who successfully employed Laban techniques with track and field athletes at Kansas University there is a dearth of research on, or examples of, crossover training between performance and sport. What this thesis is suggesting is that by crossing boundaries, a broader understanding of embodiment and the impact that training has on bodily know-how can be acquired opening the way for potential training innovations across a range of disciplines.

1.5   The game plan

This thesis, as I have mentioned, has two components: the first, an ethnographic study of Sydney University Rugby Football Club's Colts team training practices, and the second, a report on, and analysis of, the Viewpoints-inspired workshops with thirty of these players.

As a means of locating the training at Sydney University Rugby Football Club within the wider field of rugby union, Chapter Two provides a brief historical overview of rugby union and rugby union training, from its origins in the public schools of England to the age of internationalism and professionalism. It sets some major turning points in the game's path to its current form and considers how the historical coaching and training practices of the *gentleman's* game have influenced contemporary training.

The ethnographic fieldwork is at the core of Chapter Three, as I outline the foundational structures that frame Sydney University Rugby Club's Colts training. I describe the physical, coach-centred and competitive nature of training and examine the embodied knowledge acquired. I argue that training, although toughening the players for match day play, does not consider other aspects of the game particularly the improvisational components, of the game. Fieldnotes are employed extensively as a method to illustrate the style, techniques and embodiment of the training.

From the rugged field of rugby training, Chapter Four shifts to the field of actor movement training, outlining the major theatrical concepts that were borrowed from, and employed in, the Viewpoints-inspired workshops. I specifically explore Bogart's Viewpoints training as a means to highlight the differences, both pedagogically and philosophically, between this form of training and those I saw employed in rugby union.

Chapter Five focuses on the Viewpoints-inspired workshops conducted with thirty Colts players. I reflect on the complexities, for the players and for myself, of developing an expanded view of bodily knowledge through a different style of training. The tensions that occurred when expectations and assumptions were challenged and reevaluated are also addressed. Once again in this chapter I draw extensively on fieldnotes from the workshops as an illustrative tool.

In the final chapter I draw together the ethnographic immersion and the Viewpoints-inspired workshops, highlighting the potential positive benefits of crossover training. I also point to the constraining factors that became evident when these two divergent cultures met in the training room. Future research possibilities, and how this thesis provokes a discussion on the nature of training within the sporting and performance fields respectively, are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: The Game Played in Heaven

2.1   Introduction

In 1995 Rugby Union officially became a professional sport, casting aside over one hundred years of amateurism. The dramatic shift from a game drawn from the heart of the English public school system, where fair play and manly virtues were considered paramount, to one that is market-driven and competitive, has had a significant impact on the way the game is played. This in turn, has influenced current coaching pedagogies in which regulation, control, 'correct' execution and achievement have become the primary focus of training. However, over recent years within the rugby fraternity, nostalgia for the running rugby of the amateur age has appeared. Indeed, the tension between professionalism and amateurism has been, and still is, a defining factor in how rugby is played, coached and trained. This chapter traces the history of rugby union, from its origins to its current state of play, creating a framework within which the training that I describe in Chapter Three can be contextualised.

For readers who may be unfamiliar with the game of rugby union, I set out with a description to set the scene.

> *The referee blows the whistle and the game begins. The opposing team tears down the field to halt the forward movement of the player with the ball. The ground shakes with the pounding of feet. Players calling to each other 'Numbers, numbers, numbers.' 'Hold.' A player is tackled and falls heavily to the ground and does not get up. The physio runs onto the field and checks his head, legs and arms. The player nods and slowly gets to his feet; he does not come off the field. The action, now on the opposite side of the field, has players scrambling for the ball, the number 9 forces his way into the ruck and pulls out the ball, throws it wide. An opposition player intercepts the pass, makes a run down the sideline but is brought down heavily by a tackle. 'Up the tempo' shouts one of the players. A scrum is called 'crouch, touch, set, engage'. The players not needed in the scrum stand back and survey the scene. 'Big push' calls one of the players. The ball is*

out of the scrum and thrown wide again. This time the winger accelerates, palms off the opposition players and makes it to the try line. (3 April 2012)

Rugby union, as the preceding vignette suggests, is an 'invasion game', in which two teams of fifteen players take to a rectangular grass field approximately 100m x 70m with goal posts at either end of the field. The 'super objective',[9] to borrow an acting term, is to outscore your opponents over two periods of play. At senior level, each half lasts for 40 minutes, with time off for injuries or other breaks in play. Points are scored by 'tries', in which a team successfully grounds the ball in its opponent's 'in-goal' area, or by kicking goals. The ball can only be passed backwards and, when ball is in hand, the opposition attempts to tackle the runner and gain possession for themselves.

Each team is broken into two sections, the forwards, and the backs: eight players in the forward pack and seven in the backs. French rugby player Pierre Danos was famously quoted as saying 'there are two types of rugby players: those who play pianos and those who move pianos' (quoted in Wines 2010: 36). In other words, body shape is a crucial factor in player position. The forwards are the piano movers, strong and sturdy. The forward pack is made up of three front rowers, two second-rowers, two flankers and a number eight. The front-rowers have a hyper-developed neck musculature, stocky bodies and very strong thigh muscles. They are the players who are the first line of contact against the opposing team's scrum. These players rarely have to run very far at pace or pass the ball. The second-rowers are taller and leaner than nearly every other player in the team and are characterised by strong upper bodies. They are the jumpers; they leap into the air when the ball is thrown into the line-out. On the outside of each of the second rowers is an openside and blindside flanker, and behind them a Number 8. These three players are the hardest to identify as physical types, because they serve a number of functions in the team and can be, variously, lean, tall or stocky. The defining element is that they have to be strong and fast. They are the ball stealers and defenders: risk takers, playing on the edge, whose main task is to get to the point at which a player has been tackled—the 'break down'—and secure access to the ball by either protecting it from the

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[9] Super-objective is a term credited to Konstantin Stanislavski. It means the over-arching aim that draws a character into action and, in a broader sense the core meaning of a play script.

opposing team or seeking to 'turn it over': that is, to steal the ball. It is often their personality rather than their body type that categorises this position: they are relentless hunters, tirelessly pursuing the ball across the field.

If a ball or a player touches the sidelines or 'goes into touch' a line-out is called: the forwards from each team form parallel lines, perpendicular to the point at which the ball left the field of play, and the ball is thrown between the teams. When the ball is knocked forward, or is contested by opposing players with no hope of a clear outcome, a 'scrum' is set: the forwards from each team bind together in three rows and lock horns with the opposing 'pack', seeking to win the ball, using only their feet. Wines, with the kind of over-reach characterising rugby enthusiasts' discourse, has described the scrum as an 'impromptu cathedral' (2010: 35).

The number 9, or half-back, is often smaller and is there to clear the ball when it is on the ground, reaching into the base of scrums, rucks and mauls to secure the ball and distribute it, either to a forward 'standing off', who will crash into the opponent's defensive line close to the ruck area, or to the outside backs, who will attempt to open up the game by either kicking or passing to one of the outside backs. All the back line players tend to be lean and fast and have a highly developed ability to pass and catch a ball. The poster boy of the team (look at nearly every rugby union team) is the five-eighth: in some rugby jurisdictions this position is referred to as 'outside' or 'stand-off' half, and sometimes 'fly-half'. This player is positioned between the half-back and the three quarters (hence five-eighth), and is generally the first receiver of the half-back's pass. Their task is to direct the next phase of play, and they enjoy a reputation for not being tackled, and hence avoiding the kinds of facial injuries and scarring other players accumulate over the season. I once mistook a player as a five-eight and he said 'I won't be offended if you think I play in that position because of my looks'. He was a Number 8.

2.2   Origins or myth

The Australian Rugby Union (ARU) website has a section named 'Tradition and Heritage' under which the following is placed:

> The ethos of rugby has shaped a code of behaviour that has transcended generations since 1823. Its time-honoured legacy creates a broader social environment for the sport that engages the family and community and strengthens the ties that bind Australia together. (ARU: 2013)

This time-honoured legacy however, warrants closer examination.

The origins of Rugby Union are heavily mythologised. It is widely accepted that Rugby Union became a game in its own right when in 1823 William Webb Ellis, a student at the Rugby School in England, picked up a ball during a game of football—a game where the use of one's hands was, if not explicitly forbidden (no book of rules existed per se), then at least counter to convention and received wisdom—and ran with it to the other end of the playing field. A statue erected at Rugby School with a chiseled epitaph explains this foundational moment:

> This Stone Commemorates The Exploit Of William Webb Ellis Who With A Fine Disregard For The Rules Of Football, As Played In His Time, First Took The Ball In His Arms & Ran With It, Thus Originating The Distinctive Feature Of The Rugby Game A.D. 1823. (Booth 2005: 116)

It is a compelling origin myth, with significant buy-in. Since the inaugural Rugby World Cup in 1987, this action is commemorated every four years when the captain of the winning Rugby Union World Cup team hoists the William Webb Ellis trophy high above his head. Jenny Macrory, an ex-librarian from Rugby School contends that the William Webb Ellis story is, indeed, fact, and can be corroborated by correspondence and publications of the Old Rugbeian committee (1991). She argues that the story came into prominence to counter Montague Sherman's judgment, in his 1887 history, that rugby union was a 'primitive game'. 'In short', Macrory explains, 'the [Rugbeian] Committee wanted to show that rugby was a modern game' (quoted in Booth 2005: 117).

However, William J Baker (1981), Dunning and Sheard (2005) and Collins (2009) all assert that the event is mythical and, in fact, founded on a story written by a Rugby School Old Boy Matthew Bloxam, published in the Rugby School's magazine *Meteor* in 1880. They counter Macrory's argument citing evidence that Bloxam had left the school prior to 1823, and therefore could not have witnessed the event. Baker and Collins share Dunning and Sheard's opinion that it could not be a coincidence that the story emerged at

a pivotal moment in rugby union's history—a time when the game was coming under threat from 'commercialisation and proletarianisation' (Dunning and Sheard 2005: 52) by clubs outside the public schools' sphere of influence. Dunning and Sheard argue:

> By giving pride of place in their [Old Rugbeians] report to the Webb Ellis story an origin myth which correctly locates the beginnings of Rugby football in their school, they were, it is reasonable to suggest, attempting to consolidate their ranks and reassert their proprietorship in the face of a powerful 'alien' threat. (2005: 52)

William J Baker likens Macrory's evidence to a creationist story with no basis of truth:

> a Biblical tradition deeply entrenched in Victorian thought. As God decisively spun out the heavens and the earth in six days, young Ellis created rugby football ex nihilo in one mighty act. (1981: 125)

Dunning and Sheard also dismiss Macrory's 'creationist' theory by providing substantial evidence to support the concept that the foundational moment in rugby union was not just Ellis's 'deviant' act, but, a 'collective invention' (2005: 53) of Rugby School to gain acceptance as a leader in public education.

2.3   Manly virtues and the amateur ethos

Whether myth or fact, the story of William Webb Ellis is still widely accepted amongst the rugby fraternity. Given the emphatically conservative milieu in which Rugby has flourished, it is ironic that an act of willful transgression is so broadly accepted as a moment worthy of marking the birth of a sport.[10] According to Macrory, Webb Ellis' action was acceptable, and indeed accepted, because

> [a] player running in knew that he would face intense opposition . . . [Webb Ellis] chose to take the risk, and it was in recognition not only of his physical achievement but of his courage that in the rare cases when he succeeded he was rewarded by a securing a try at goal. (quoted in Nauright and Chandler 1996: 18)

To take such a physical risk, displaying courage and daring, was to embody a specific, valorised set of manly characteristics. These values are reinforced to the contemporary player as the ARU website proposes:

> Rugby Union is a game that develops leadership, team spirit, courage, sportsmanship, and friendship. These values and traditions develop from the first

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[10] Discussions on myth making in sport can be found in Hill et al. 2012; Booth 2005; and Wagg 2011.

time a young player shakes hands with their opposite number, leading to a life long passion for and involvement with the game at all levels. Foremost, the game of Rugby embodies the best Australian values and the nation's indomitable spirit. (ARU 2013)

The concept of 'manly virtues' is a theme discussed in William J. Baker (1981), Collins (2009), Mangan (2010a,b,c), Nauright and Chandler (1996), and Dunning and Sheard (2005). Pierre Bourdieu offers a succinct précis:

Rugby football became a suitable instrument for affirming the manly virtues of future leaders, a training ground in courage and manliness, forming the character and instilling the will to win but a will to win within the rules. This is 'fair play,' conceived as an aristocratic disposition utterly opposed to the plebian pursuit of victory at all costs. (1978: 825)

Mangan's observation that fair play was not the 'instinctive behaviour of gentlemen but the acquired behaviour of roughnecks—albeit of some social standing' (2010c: 152) points, as does Bourdieu, to the class anxieties that lie very close to the surface of Rugby Union. This is evidenced further in the adage popularised by its inclusion in *Invictus,* Clint Eastwood's film of the South African triumph at the 1995 World Cup: 'rugby union is a hooligan's game played by gentlemen'.[11]

Chandler argues that, in order to inculcate the notion of 'fair play', the concept of the gentleman had to be redefined.

Gentlemanliness no longer meant just toughness of muscle and physical vigour, power and strength, force and firmness. It meant self-discipline and self-motivation, a mastery of passions, patience and the control of energy; it meant character. (1996: 25)

'Character' is still a common description employed by contemporary rugby union commentators and coaches when teams have narrowly won or narrowly lost. Ex-Wallabies coach Ewen McKenzie gives one such example after a nail-biting win against Argentina:

'[y]ou have to give credit to them, they didn't stop believing, they didn't stop attacking, I think they tried to keep ball in hand as much as possible tonight. I think that shows *character* after the loss against the All Blacks a couple of weeks ago'. (quoted in Mulvenney 2014, emphasis added)

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[11] There are many variations to this adage eg. 'rugby union is a barbarian's game played by gentlemen'.

This statement certainly has echoes of the past.

While there is no clear evidence as to how and when the idea of 'fair play', 'character' and 'playing for pleasure' morphed into a tenet that became known as the 'amateur ethos', amateurism is, as Norman Baker (2004), Collins (2006) and Holt (1992) point out, much more complex than a simple question of whether players receive payment or not. It is, rather, an overarching ideal with several practical entailments. Training was discouraged (Collins 2010), 'the team' became paramount (Mangan 2010a,c), a game was for the pleasure of the participant, rather than for the spectator whose enjoyment was of secondary significance (Dunning and Sheard 2005, Holt 2012). Although winning was not unimportant, it was to be kept in perspective; defeat was to be accepted gracefully, victory with humility. Implicit in these ideals was that amateurism was a 'more morally superior basis for sport than professionalism' (Norman Baker 2004: 14).

The British Rugby Football Union (RFU) and its colonial satrapies doggedly adhered to the amateur ethos up until 1995. This commitment to the values of amateurism, 'rather than sporting priorities such as the expansion of the game or success on the playing field' (Collins 2006: 386), has shaped the way rugby union has been played, coached, refereed and developed across all rugby playing nations.

2.4   The rise of the coach and professionalism

Historically, training methods in particular have been strongly influenced by the amateur ethos. Coaching, as Collins observes, implied professionalism but also threatened the eminent, exemplary position of the team captain (2010). The team captain had been a bastion of public education and continued the notion of rugby preparing young men for the responsibilities of the outside world. The paradigmatic model of the captain is captured in the words of Harry Vassall, himself the paradigm of the amateur gentleman athlete. An alumnus of Marlborough College and Oxford and captain of the English team from 1881-1883, he wrote:

> The fair name of any side is largely in the keeping of the captain, for not only is he responsible for the collective skill with which his team plays, but also for the spirit

with which they play it, and, in Rugby, as in all forms of sport, a fair name is better than victory. (quoted in Collins 2010: 109)

Despite the RFU's efforts to keep rugby firmly in the hands of the gentleman athlete, there was a slew of training manuals in the early part of the twentieth century, such as *Manual of Rugby Football for Public Schools* published in 1925, *First Steps to Rugby Football* in 1922 and *Rugger* in 1928 (Collins 2010). Although stressing the moral value of playing the game, the manuals inferred that there was more to the game than mere enjoyment, and frequently likened rugby union to war. Winning became increasingly important, leading to what might be described as 'small p' professionalism: teams became, as Collins observes, '[p]rofessional in spirit if not in remuneration' (2010: 111). At the 1948 International Rugby Board (IRB) meeting, which Australia, New Zealand and South Africa attended for the first time, the minutes record the following statement:

> The employment of a paid trainer or coach is contrary to the principles of amateur rugby football and it is contrary to the spirit of amateur rugby football that teams should be assembled at a centre during a period prior to a match for the purpose of a change of air and training. (quoted in Collins 2010: 113)

Despite this statement, the growth of international touring following the conclusion of the Second World War put rugby union under pressure to create a more 'systematic and organised approach to team preparation' (Collins 2010: 114). Just what this systematic and organised approach consisted of is open to speculation, as there is little literature on the subject. Collins notes that with the introduction of physical education courses at tertiary level there may have been greater emphasis on physical fitness (2010:114). Certainly by the end of the 1960s, physical fitness as well as tactical diagrams were an important element of training. *Tactical and Attacking Rugby* (1967), a manual written by Izak Van Heerdon, who had coached the Springboks in 1962, is one of many books written in this era that focused on fitness and tactics.

The lead up to the 1995 World Cup in South Africa constituted a dramatic turning point for rugby union playing and coaching. To begin with, South Africa recognised that if players were to commit to the preparation for the World Cup they would need to be financially compensated for their time and lost earnings. Linked to this was Rupert Murdoch's bid to secure sole television rights to rugby league and to create a 'Super League', modelled on

the mass-media industrialisation of basketball, grid-iron and baseball in the United States, an initiative that threatened to skyrocket league to the status of pre-eminent sport in Australia. It was also predicted that many rugby union players in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa would be drawn to the lucrative payment offers now becoming available and switch codes (Dunning and Sheard 2005: 255). Without consulting the (IRB), SANZAR (a group formed from the rugby union boards of South Africa, New Zealand and Australia) negotiated a ten-year deal with Rupert Murdoch and his flagship media corporation, News Corp, granting exclusive television rights to rugby union matches in the Southern Hemisphere. On 27 August 1995 the IRB, bowing to the pressure, declared that rugby union would become an open game and there would be no prohibition of payment at any level of the game (Bale 1995).

Rugby Union had officially become a professional game. As part of the News Corp deal a new Super 12 (now Super 15) competition was established with teams—effectively franchises—from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, with the express purpose of winning new audiences with exciting and positive play. An element of this deal was News Corp's right to schedule matches to optimise and maximise the value of television rights. Rugby historian Mark Bailey lamented that 'excessive commercialism knows the price of everything and the value of nothing and will destroy rugby's special qualities' (1995: 163), a view subsequently shared by Skinner, Steward and Edwards, who argued that the ravaging forces of commercialism undermined Rugby's traditional sports values, practices and structures (2003).

Professionalism has had a far-reaching impact upon the game, particularly with regard to the demands placed on clubs to be both entertaining and economically viable. Players also have greater demands placed on them, because of the longer playing season, and the need for players to be in optimal condition for the highly competitive matches. With the results-driven mentality, coaching has had to become more scientific, with a coterie of support staff employed by professional and amateur clubs. Eichberg contends that sporting bodies have become 'one dimensional – faster, higher, stronger, controlled by sports physiologists, psychologists, nutritionists etc – a streamlined body projectile' (1998: 152).

Former Welsh and current Japanese coach, Leigh Jones, supports this view, noting that he has witnessed a 'remarkable transition in the shape and type of players produced over the past 5-10 years, and the effect those changes have brought to performance levels and the overall impact on the game' (Jones 2014). Knowledge of the game is no longer a matter of trial and error; it is delivered from the top down and execution is quantified, measured and registered. Even at the grassroots level of club and school rugby, where players train week after week for no remuneration, training mirrors the regimes of professional rugby organisations, with the desire to win no less important.

There is, then, a profound tension between the legacy of the amateur tradition and the demands of the new professionalism, in particular the expectations placed at all levels of the game; not only to win games, but to provide entertainment to live and television audiences. Pursuant to this is the speed, strength and agility required of the players, demands for which have seen the increasing introduction of ideas and approaches from sports science into rugby union discourse. In particular, the role of strength and conditioning (S & C) coaches and physiotherapists has become increasingly important, as is demonstrated by Jones' comment:

> Bigger, faster, stronger and multi-skilled players are also being exposed to the army of conditioning coaches and new fitness technology available is making them even more powerful through the inordinate weights and conditioning sessions. (Jones 2014)

In contrast, despite the growth of science in the training of Rugby Union players, the formal coaching and administration of the game has not been taken on by experts: it has remained the domain of ex-rugby players. This is perhaps a legacy of the days when the captain assumed the role of coach, and training regimes relied primarily on passed-down knowledge. This view is supported by Light and Evans' (2011) research, which explains that coaches often reproduce the coaching culture of their coach. To put this in Bourdieuian (1978) terms, a structure has been sedimented in the individual that molds their approach to the world. As one of the coaches interviewed in Light and Evans' study remarks, 'I don't think there's anything dramatically new. I think everyone's got fundamentally the same broad structures' (2011: 10). The current generation of Australian

Super Rugby coaches (five in all), and national coaches are ex-players, providing further evidence that coaching is firmly 'steeped in the culture of the game' (Horton 2009a: 972).

With the captain no longer the key decision-maker of the team, the coach, now under pressure to perform and deliver victory often has taken real-time on-field decision making away from the players, designing predetermined structures that players learn and then implement on the field (Evans & Light 2008, Light & Evans 2011); execution rather than innovation becomes key. Rugby union commentator Wayne Smith bemoans the influence the coach has over the decision making on the field, making the point that 'halfback Nic White took McKenzie's pre-match instructions to play for field position against the Springboks in Cape Town so literally that five-eighth Quade Cooper received precisely one pass from him in the first half' (Smith 2014). For the record the Wallabies lost this match 38-12.

Former Wallaby coach Bob Dwyer, whose team won the 1991 World Cup, told me in a conversation over coffee (06/12/12). that few coaches now believe they have the luxury of allowing players to make their own decisions. In contrast, the coaching philosophy he imparted to his World Cup team was boiled down to the following: 'You have three choices; pass the ball, run with the ball, or kick the ball. I'm not out on the field so I can't make that choice for you.'

'Games Sense' or 'Teaching Games for Understanding' is a style of sports training developed in the early 1980s that offered an alternative to traditional coaching; one in which player decision-making is a priority. Although coaches employed mock games as an element of training, questioning and reflection, the pedagogical underpinnings of Games Sense, have not been systematically adopted (Evans 2010). Games Sense pedagogy, according to Evans and Light (2010, 2011) wrestled control from the coaches, something with which, from my observations, few coaches are comfortable.

There is, currently, a call from commentators for a more 'free flowing' style of rugby: a 'running style' that harks back to the golden age of Australian amateur rugby when ball-in-hand rugby was a signature of the winning Australian teams, and players were expected

to demonstrate their own flair. John Eales, former Australian Rugby Union captain from this golden age, made the point that the newly-appointed coach of the NSW based Super 15 team, the Waratahs, could not 'cut corners in his pursuit of entertaining, attacking and winning rugby' and that 'structure on its own is predictable and eventually impotent' (2013). When Ewen McKenzie was appointed Wallabies coach in 2013, he was tasked with the job of bringing running rugby back. Bill Pulver, the Chairman of the Australian Rugby Union, made this point clearly when announcing McKenzie as coach stating that '[a]rguably the most important (criteria) is that he has the ability to coach the way the Australian public wants the Wallabies to play—smart, creative running rugby' (ABC 2013).

Are adjustments to traditional coaching methodologies being implemented to deliver this 'creative running rugby'? Mark Philp, Rugby Participation Manager with the ARU in 2014, stated in a conversation (05/02/2014) that a new player-centred coaching strategy currently being implemented across the country is a start. Yet, a review of the ARU literature for coaching suggests that this strategy is not widely disseminated and, in fact, the majority of the resources place the coach firmly as the decision maker of game plans (ARU 2014). This correlates with the observations I make in the next chapter demonstrating how a traditional coach-down approach is still in play.

Although coaching techniques have been hotly debated since 2007, when Australia failed to progress to the finals in the World Cup, the focus has been on coaches' style, rather than on *what* is being trained. Comparing coaching manuals from the 1960s, those more current and the modules obtained from the ARU or World Rugby websites, it is evident that skills training has not substantially altered. Although, as I noted before, strength and conditioning is now an integral element of contemporary training, the techniques for teaching passing, catching, scrummaging, line-outs remain virtually unchanged. The one difference, perhaps is the abandonment of what former English captain Dick Greenwood describes as 'players' inalienable right to play like a pillock' (quoted in Harris 2010: 45).

2.5   Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have explored the traditions within the world of rugby union; traditions that in many ways appear in opposition to each other. A game where the recalcitrant player (Webb Ellis) is heralded as hero, yet 'character' is a desired quality of all players. The staunch adherence to the amateur ethos that has its roots not entirely in fair play but in the desire of the public school elite to control the game. The dichotomy between the 'not winning-at-all-costs' attitudes inculcated at club level, against the severe criticism of the national team if it does not win; the shaking of hands after a game set against the violent outbursts on the field.

The rise of the coach, with a set of coaching principles that focus on tactics and basic skills, is also steeped in tradition with few innovations in training practices, apart from the growth of sports science. These are the traditions that inform the game and training, at an explicit and implicit level, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: Into the Field

3.1   Introduction

So this is the field of rugby union—where tradition is strong, professionalism dominant and bodies have roles and purpose—into which I ventured to conduct an ethnographic study of the training practices of Sydney University Football Club (SUFC). SUFC is a club imbued with the history and traditions of rugby union. The club website announces SUFC as 'the birthplace of Australian Rugby' and the eighth oldest club in the world. The club prides itself on its success, having won 29 First Grade Premierships and 106 Premierships in total across all Grade and Colts teams since 1900. Within the Sydney rugby union competition, SUFC is a major player. The SUFC website also publicises the fact that it has the 'proud tradition of producing representative players': 112 Australian Representatives, of whom ninety-three are Wallabies, who between them, have played 930 test matches. The club song, sung at Club functions and after games that have been won, espouses camaraderie and long-term allegiances:

> Some of us are mining,
> Some in arts reclining,
> More and more
> Attack the law
> And revel in its methods of refining;
> Some are fools and some are clever
> Faculties divide and sever,
> Still we all belong forever
> To our 'Varsity. (SUFC 2012)

Players who join this club are entering a field that has a 'history, culture and an intense rich social aesthetic and emotional life of its own' (Wacquant 2011: 84) The three current Head coaches have all played for the club they are coaching and are therefore 'inculcated with institutional knowledge' (Calhoun 2003: 293).

The players the ethnographic study revolves around are in the Colts division of SUFC. The Colts must be under 20 years of age at a census date early in the season. Most of the players are attending the University of Sydney, some on scholarships provided by the club. There are also a handful of players who play with the club because, as they

explained to me, 'Sydney University takes rugby seriously'. The Team Manager reinforced this concept when he told me that 'Sydney Uni was renowned for its discipline and good coaching'.

SUFC has what I will refer to as a characteristic 'playing language', a common language that, Head Coach 2012 (Jack) informed me, 'promoted a club culture'. The names of each structured move and line-out calls are written down in a playbook that is updated every season. The language enables players to move seamlessly between teams or Grades and appears to be unique to the club as, according to Jack, the other Sydney Clubs only have a 'team rather than club' language.[12] On the first night of training Jack provided each player with a printed sheet on which were listed the names of the moves the players would be required to learn. The coaches decide upon names such as 'rum and coke'; 'the hammer'; 'knife and fork' at the beginning of the season. When I asked why they change the names each season, Tristan (Strength & Conditioning coach) replied, 'It's for security. We don't want other teams to learn our moves'.

The players and coaches also have their own personal history with the game. As I have already mentioned, all the coaches have played the game—some to representative level—although most have given up playing and turned to coaching due to injuries. Many of the players have attended Sydney private[13] schools where rugby was an integral aspect of their education. Others commented that it was 'part of my upbringing'; 'my father and uncles all played so it was a natural thing to do'; 'my father got me into it'; 'I haven't known anything different'.

The players and coaches, therefore, understand the rules of the game not only in a literal sense but also in the manner of what Bourdieu calls the 'logics of practice', namely the implicit knowledge about the way things get done in and around the game (Bourdieu 1990). In other words, the players and coaches have a practical sense of how to be in this particular social field. These players and coaches, in their Sydney University shirts

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[12] Anecdotal evidence, given to me by my two sons who each play with different clubs, supports this. They have confirmed that each team, within a given club, has its own names for moves, and that players moving between teams, because of changes in form or injury, have to learn everything afresh.

[13] In an Australian context the term 'private school' refers vis-à-vis to the English term 'public school'.

and shorts, have skills in catching, passing, running and tackling, know the language and expectations of the club and give the appearance, even to an untrained eye, that they understand the 'correct' practices of this field and 'instinctively fit into the environment' (Bourdieu 1972: 55).

3.2   An outsider

The first time I turned up to the training I felt like an intruder. Although Jack introduced me to the other coaches, he did not establish the context for my appearance and there was no time before the training began to explain the purpose of my presence. I stood in the middle of the field and felt vulnerable; this vulnerability made starker when a player chasing a high ball almost toppled me. I found a less central position on the sideline, got out my pen and focused on what was happening in front of me.

I became immediately aware of two of the inherent difficulties of ethnographic research: what to look at and what to write down. McAuley points out that positioning is 'inevitably going to influence the interpretation and colour of analysis' (1998: 81). Clifford (1986) reminds the ethnographer that, as soon as a moment is recorded, a choice has been made and, by the very act of choosing, every other observation has been excluded. So I made the decision at the first training session, maintained throughout the study, to observe with a 'soft focus', a term used by Bogart (2005) to describe a relaxing of one's gaze so that rather than one or two things being in sharp focus, the eye can take in many. 'By taking the pressure off the eyes to be the dominant and primary information gatherer' Bogart explains, 'the whole body starts to listen and gather information in new and more sensitised ways' (2005: 31).

Attending the first training of the season was any male between the ages of 17-20 who wanted to play for the Sydney University Rugby Football Club Colts. There were over sixty young men, six coaches and two managers in attendance. Players arrived with a wide variety of shirts and shorts, but there were twelve players who had a distinctive blue and yellow (SUFC colours) jersey emblazoned with the SUFC logo and blue shorts. These were the 'elite' players who are given individualised training programs, access to

club physiotherapists, a weekly health assessment and assistance, if they are a University of Sydney student, with their university workload. These players are strictly monitored and can be removed from the program if they display a lack of commitment to training regimes and match play. The Head Coach chooses the squad, with some input from the Strength and Conditioning (S&C) coach, at the beginning of the year. No other additions are made once that squad has been selected. These players are believed to have the talent and the disposition to achieve representative status. Four of these boys were chosen in the Under 20s Australian squad that competed at the 2012 World U20s tournament, raising both their personal status, and that of the team amongst other clubs. This squad is playing for higher stakes, striving to expand their position in the broader field of rugby union. There is a sense of urgency about achieving higher status because, as a player noted, 'you never know when you are going to be injured so you have to try really hard to make the next level'.

Talking to a number of these boys at a later training, it became clear that these 'elite players' are well aware of the competition within the rugby arena, but they all thought that being part of this squad was a definite step up the ladder. They understood that they must keep on top of their game and work hard to gain an advantage over other players in the wider rugby union field. As one said, 'I have to put the commitment in because there are lots of other guys trying to be a Super 15 player or Wallaby'. He also explained, in the next breath, 'but you've got to have passion for the game. If you don't have the passion there is no point to the training'.

3.3   Repetitive Patterns

Patterns of behaviour were set up at the first training session. The following fieldnote, written after this session, echoes the beginning of all subsequent training sessions

> *The coaches are setting up equipment—cones, tackle bags, tackle pads—while the boys, in a number of informal circles, are throwing footballs to each other. Their passes are casual, as they chat about the weekend as the ball circulates, clockwise, around the gathered player—'Bro how many beers did you have ...'; 'had a late one ...'; 'have you been to the gym ...'—relaxed young men laughing*

together. This convivial mood immediately changes as Jack shouts 'Let's go! Let's go! Let's go!' to the players, who appear to innately know exactly what this means: they jog to the other end of the field where Garrick, another coach, is waiting. At this call to action the players' bodies and attitude change. Gone is the relaxed posture and the idle chatter. Chests puff out, visibly filling jerseys, faces are set into a countenance of concentration, leg muscles become defined in readiness. At 6.30pm, the official starting time for training, the young men have transformed before my eyes from mates engaged in idle banter to rugby union players. (4 March 2012)

The large Colts squad trained together for the first six training sessions but, after three trial games against other clubs, the players were allocated to particular teams: Firsts, Seconds, Thirds or Fourths. Each team had two designated coaches. The S&C coach (Tristan) floated between each team. My observations were concentrated on the Firsts team, the star squad with three coaches: Jack, David and Garrick. Jack and Tristan are the only coaches on the Sydney University Club payroll; the other coaches are volunteers. Jack oversees all the training with the eye of a traditional coach; there is no doubt who is in charge of the trainings.

Training was split into timed sections, each section focused on a particular skill. Tuesday night training concentrated on drills and improving skills that had not been successfully or satisfactorily executed at the game on the previous Saturday. Thursday involved a more fluid training, where set plays such as scrums and lineouts were practised, and a simulated game was played against one of the other teams, usually the Seconds squad.

Jack set up each drill and gave instructions or demonstrated the skill that was being developed. On the majority of occasions, drills were repeated for approximately ten minutes. Drills were always executed with players, both attackers and defenders, in designated channels across the space, with a number of drills set up in parallel across the training ground. Players rotated through each drill. Players were often punished with push-ups if the ball was dropped, or their body position was incorrect.

The coaches' expectation that the players work hard, be disciplined, be committed and do any task they are told to do was evident at every training session. Training was rarely cancelled and, if the oval was too saturated to be used the teams moved to an alternate venue with a surface that was relatively safe for the players. At one rain-soaked training, I stood on an Astroturf tennis court with a large umbrella providing a modicum of protection, while the players were expected to work, hard.

> *The boys[14] are soaked. The rain is pouring down. The boys are wrestling with an opponent, a call from the coach causes them to drop to the ground, then up they get and sprint to the other end of the court where they begin wrestling again. Each player is trying desperately to push the other down. This is nearing the end of the training session and the players are still working at full strength and speed. It is a sprint to the end of the court and fast reflexes are expected when the players drop to the ground. 'Dig in, dig in', 'get him man', 'that's the way' are the calls as the boys wrestle each other, trying to match strength for strength'. 'Work, work, work, work' shouts Jack.* (17 April 2012)

Players constantly have instructions barked at them throughout the training sessions: 'Let's go, let's go, let's go – apply yourself.' 'Take space, take space, take space.' 'Eyes up, eyes up, eyes up.' 'Get aggressive, get aggressive, get aggressive.' 'Jog it in, jog it in, jog it in.' Simple instructions. Nearly always in threes. I asked the coaches about the trio of repetitions, and all said that they hadn't realised they were doing it. Perhaps, Jack surmised, 'we are concerned that the first time the players won't hear the instruction so we say it again and then one more time just to be sure'. It was a genuine reflection and, from my observations, had a strong element of truth.

Each squad had an assigned area on the oval on which to train. The Firsts squad was given half the oval, the Seconds a quarter and Thirds and Fourths (who trained together) shared the final quarter. Although these areas were not marked out, it was rare for the other teams to encroach on the Firsts' territory. With each drill, the team moved to a different area within the space, delineated by formations of cones that had been

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[14] The coaches and managers always refer to the players as 'the boys'.

prearranged by the coaches, depending on the outcome to be achieved. Half the oval was used when the teams had a mock game at Thursday sessions, but the whole oval was never used. As I watched the compressed playing space inhabited by the strong muscular bodies of the players intent on their battle-like drills, I could feel the intensity of the training. These players did not appear to be just playing a game. It had the look of something much more serious.

For me, it was the noise that permeated each drill that was one of the defining factors of the training. At the very early trainings, Jack repeatedly reminded the players to 'talk'. 'If you can't talk you shouldn't be playing rugby!' 'If you are not going to talk then there is no point in you being here!' 'If you don't talk you're out. You have got to be a lot more vocal!' The players take this on board and the sound during each drill is tumultuous.

> *'Hold, hold, hold', 'Mine, mine, mine', 'Short, short, short', 'I've got 10', 'I've got D', 'Dig in, dig in, dig in.' 'Work, work, work.' 'Left, left, left.' 'Right, right, right' shout the players over and on top of each other. 'Tempo, tempo, tempo!' 'Get aggressive!' 'You're not kissing the boy!!!' 'Control it!' 'Skills here boys, let's switch on!' bellow the coaches. Intermingled with this cacophony is the crunch of bodies, the slap of flesh on flesh, the forceful expulsion of air from lungs, the pounding of feet, the ball being passed through air, and bodies slamming into the ground. The sound is magnified as it reverberates against the buildings surrounding the field.*

> *I feel embraced, swallowed whole by the sea of sound. I am caught up in the intensity of the moment; wincing, averting my eyes, gasping, imagining the pain these bodies are feeling. Machine-like in their execution, but with fluidity of movement, the effect is simultaneously efficient and aesthetic: there is a certain beauty in the precision, the thoroughness, the committedness of the exchanges.* (10 May 2012)

Yet, for these players and the coaches, it is the efficiency that is the primary function of the training. The drills, as one player told me, are to develop 'muscle memory', so that in the heat of the game the body would remember a body position and be able to execute a move effectively. Tackling with the inside shoulder, staying low in a tackle, solid contact of

the torso, rolling onto the side when tackled, keeping eyes up, staying balanced in the scrum, squaring the body with the defender and putting your hands out to catch the ball are skills that are drilled each training session. There is no discussion about how different bodies should approach the task. It is the position of the body that is important, not the individual. Training is not about discovering how the body works; it is about executing the choreographed moves in the correct way. 'Don't make up your own stuff!' Jack chastises when a player tries a move that he has not specified.

I asked the players whether the choreography of the moves they learnt at training was transferred onto the playing field. They all said that it gave them a feeling of security knowing that their team players could predict the next move. One front rower was particularly adamant about the 'set moves'; knowing his role in the move enabled him to conserve energy. Front rowers don't like to work too hard!

'Knowing your role' is another dictum of the training. 'You all know your roles,' shouts Jack 'Stay disciplined to your roles' he reiterates. During training the boys all shout out their role: 'I've got 10'; 'I'm shadow'; 'I'm lead'; 'I've got D (defence)'. Each role has a particular task. The 'shadow player' follows the lead runner and acts as a decoy for the defence. If you 'have D' it means you will be the tackler of the approaching attacker. If you have '10' it means you will be the first receiver of the ball. There can be no confusion about roles as this leads to dropped balls and lost opportunities. 'Discipline boys, discipline' is another of the coaches' mantras.

3.4   Bodies as weapons

The physical force demanded of the players was a characteristic of training sessions. At one training 'the boys' were engaged in a drill in which they threw the ball to their left and then ran into a tackle bag.

> *'Be aggressive,' shouts Jack. He stops the drill and throws himself with force into the bag to show the boys how he wants them to approach the drill. The boys repeat the exercise this time with commitment. Boy after boy throws the ball to the left and then runs full pelt into the tackle bag, jumps back to his feet and starts all*

over again. There are no groans, winces, complaints; just comments from Jack when someone has either propelled himself with extra velocity at the tackle bag or not ferociously enough. (24 April 2012)

Bourdieu contends that the way people treat their bodies 'reveals the deepest disposition of habitus' (1984: 190, 466). When these players willingly used their 'bodies as weapons', demonstrated by their bodies being pummeled week after week, it revealed a fundamental principle in how these young men constructed and evaluated their rugby union playing world.

There is a deep, guttural moan that explodes as the two packs engage and begin pushing. 'Great fucking hit' says one of the Seconds forwards when they win the first scrum. 'Aggressive – real tight again' another adds. Out of the scrum the primal grunt erupts once again as packs hit each other. 'Got to use your shoulder to get control of the opposition' the Firsts coach tells his players. 'Good hit!' repeats the Seconds player as they win the scrum for the second time. 'Great scrum, great scrum', another echoes. As they pack down for a third time the Seconds are intense: 'Get through them, get fucking through them'.

When Jack says 'intensity' the players' bodies engage and hit the tackle with greater impact. One player is holding his side, bending over, limping, but back into the drill he goes. (1 May 2012)

Bodies were continually in crisis, colliding with other bodies. There was no room for fear. As Jack reminded the boys at several training sessions, 'This is a contact sport. You need to get aggressive'. The players understood that putting their body on the line was an important way of proving their worth within the team. Wacquant (2006) and Messner (1990) both write about bodies being used as weapons, arguing that sportspeople involved in aggressive and combative games obtain symbolic capital when they 'give their bodies up for the team' (Messner 1990: 208). At Colts' training a player who performed a 'big hit' or was perceived to be 'going all out' is congratulated. 'Great aggression!' became a familiar expression of praise throughout the training season.

However, Messner also makes the salient point that

> [t]he instrumental rationality which teaches athletes to view their own bodies as machines and weapons with which to annihilate an objectified opponent ultimately comes back upon the athlete as an alien force: the body-as-weapon ultimately results in violence against one's own body. (1990: 21)

Observing the players at training and seeing their strapped and bandaged bodies at the Tuesday training after the Saturday match attests to the fact that it is not just other bodies that bear the brunt of their weapon-like actions; it is also their own.

Training, then, is about the players hardening their bodies for the clash or war with opponents. In a similar way to Wacquant's boxers, the players are learning to 'subjugate the self-preservation reflex' (2006: 154). Giulianotti argues that the players have been socialised to believe that 'breaking pain barriers is manly and the mark of a true competitor' (2005: 104), while Crossley (2001), Hockey and Collinson (2007) and Light (2001b) contend that the repeated recognition of the value of bodily and mental toughness at training and matches has shaped the players' perception, thought and action and become an implicit and unconscious way of knowing. Many of the players I spoke to commented that they enjoyed the physical clash. 'It's why you play rugby', a player tells me or, as another player commented, 'It is the closest thing to fighting without getting into trouble'. There were nods of agreement from the other players in the group.

3.5 Higher, Faster, Stronger

In order to use their bodies as weapons, the players not only develop techniques and specific skills, they also have special training sessions that strengthen and condition their bodies. SUFC players are renowned for their fitness. 'We sometimes don't play as well as another team', said the team manager 'but we can always outrun them in the last twenty [minutes]'. 'It is our point of difference', Tristan, the S&C coach explained. SUFC is the only club in the Sydney competition that employs a full-time S&C coach.

These sessions were about training the body, developing strength, speed, agility and flexibility. Rather than honing catching and passing, scrummaging or line out skills, these were sessions that targeted the athlete. Each player in the elite squad had specific goals

that needed to be achieved. Some of the players had to develop their leg speed, some increased their shoulder strength, some needed to improve flexibility. The players were tested by Tristan and screened by a physiotherapist weekly.

Members of the First and Second squads were provided with weekly programs that targeted areas of weakness. Strength and conditioning was a stand-alone section in the training sessions. Tristan was usually given a 10-15 minute slot with each team or, if time was short, the whole Colts group would train together. In the pre-season, however, it was different, with Tristan being given entire training sessions. These sessions were particularly gruelling.

> *Tristan counted, and on the count of five, a group of eight players ran halfway up the hill: the task was to reach this point in less than fifteen seconds. Everyone in the group had to achieve this time or the entire group had to complete the sprint again. Up each group ran with Tristan hitting the stopwatch as they began and as they finished. Ten times they repeated the task running up and walking back; players encouraging each other, urging the slower ones on, knowing their fate if the time wasn't achieved. Some of the players ran with ease, while others struggled, gasping for breath, holding their sides as they walked down the hill. 'Well done!' calls Tristan when the task is completed. The players let out a cheer that quickly turns into a moan as they watch Tristan move the starting line to the point where they had previously finished. This time they are to run from the middle of the hill to the top. Loud shouts of protest silenced by Tristan's count of five. The players once again sprint up the hill.* (12 June 2012)

Watching these players sprint up the hill, being scrutinised and evaluated by Tristan, I am inclined to concur with Eichberg, who argues that modern sport has 'uncoupled itself from the rhythm of celebration' (1998: 143). Rather than playing the game for the game itself, the maxim of the modern sports coach and participant is 'higher, faster, stronger' (1998: 144), with achievement the prime motivation. The SUFC Colts players are being trained to win but, as Tristan told me at one of our chats by the sideline, 'I am also teaching the players what their bodies are capable of. If I didn't urge them on, give them targets to

achieve, most of them would probably give up.' 'Most of these players have dreams of playing at the elite level', he continued, 'so I treat them like a professional athlete. They have to know it's hard to reach that next level'.

As I observed the players puffing, panting, wincing, I wondered where the enjoyment comes from. But these players have not been coerced or paid, so they must be playing for pleasure. All the players I spoke to told me how much they loved the game, how much they loved the competition and although they did not always love the training, when they won, they saw the benefits. It would appear that the players have 'willing[ly] embrace[d] and submi[tted]' to rugby union's particular doxa (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 19-26, 127-130) and are 'inhabited by the game [they] inhabit' (Wacquant 1995: 88). It could be viewed, as Wacquant argues in respect to boxers, a virtual 'sacrificial giving of oneself to the game' (1995: 88).

Tristan also has a set of names for most of his warm up activities: 'Sumo', 'windmill', 'scorpion', 'fire-hydrant'. One I thought should have been named 'the dead cockroach', as players lay on their back with their arms and legs waving in the air. These names have to be picked up my osmosis, as there is no handout for this session. 'If a player is really struggling,' Tristan stated, 'I'll go and explain but basically the players just have to pick it up from the ones that know'.

> *The players' movements are easy. They know what to do in Tristan's warm-up sessions. The players' bodies know how to 'bear crawl', how to do 'scorpions', thoracic rotations. They train as a group responding to Tristan's call: a sea of legs waving at one moment, to an army of 'silly walkers' at the next. Some players have greater range than others throwing their leg from side to side or bending to the ground scooping up air as they rise. Some look disinterested as they are told 'hips on the ground', 'stablise shoulder blades'. Body parts are being warmed up, exercised separately and gently to begin with, then, with greater unity and intensity.* (9 May 2013)

The sessions complemented the regular training sessions. Tristan said he believed his role was to prepare the players for the style of game the coaches wanted to play and to ensure that the players were in 'peak performance' at the right time. I asked why his sessions were always a separate component to the general training and he replied, 'I can't measure the players' performance if I integrate the strength and conditioning into general training'. The players are scutinised, measured and compared in all areas of the training regime. The coaches all argued that knowing how fast, how many skin folds, how many weights could be lifted and how flexible a player was, provided evidence as to each player's performance on match day. Rarely did the coaches speak about team dynamics or team cohesion, the less tangible elements, when discussing the odds for winning a match. Why, as Denison (2010) asks, is quantitative evidence in the sports arena considered more truthful than other forms of evidence? I do not have answers for such questions but it does perhaps throw light on why, when speaking about the movement training I conducted with the players, I was always asked how I was going to quantify the success of the training.

3.6   Execution not innovation

It is a rare occurrence for players to have input into the training sessions. Occasionally, the coaches asked for feedback or questions but on the whole the players remained silent. Coaching at SUFC is a top-down affair. Players are instructed by demonstration or verbal description.

> *'Body shape, weight forward, don't lead with your shoulder,' calls Jack as the players are engaged in a rucking drill. He looks around to find a player who has achieved the correct body position and gets him to demonstrate to the group. The players go back to the drill. Jack stops the players again. This time he uses his own body to demonstrate what he wants. The players continue the drill with the coaches surveying the scene intervening when players are not performing the drill precisely the way they have been shown.* (26 April 2012)

When Jack was promoted to the role of Head of SUFC coaching at the end of 2012, his assistant coach, David, took over the reigns of the Colts coaching for the following year.

Although different coaches, the style of coaching observed in 2012 had a distinctly familiar feel in 2013.

> *David is calling 'Take space, take space, take space'. 'Energy up boys, take space, take space, take space.' 'Defensive breakdown, take space.' 'Keep your head up don't drop it down.' 'TAKE SPACE, EYES UP.' David's voice booms around the oval. He is calling instructions throughout each drill. He has repeated 'take space' at least twenty times in the last 3 minutes and still the players have their head down. 'Get him down, get him down, GET HIM DOWN' he shouts at the players during a rucking drill. The intensity of the drill increases and one boy runs to the side and throws up looking in considerable pain. The drill continues 'Fight Rohan, fight'. David stops the drill and demonstrates how to take a low chop.[15] 'Absolutely key on the weekend low chop, take space'.* (5 September 2013)

I asked David whether he would coach differently if he coached for another club. He replied that he only knew the SUFC way of coaching as he had played for SUFC and been coached by an ex-SUFC coach when he left SUFC to play in Japan: 'This style of coaching is the only style I know'.

The SUFC style fits a traditional model of coaching, in which the coach transfers knowledge to the players. Training was a monological mode of communication rather than a dialogue between coach and players (Light 2010). The coaches continually adjusted the shape, position, and purpose of the players' bodies. The players' bodies complied with the training regimes in an effort to become efficient in the task that was required of them. The players could resist, but as I stated earlier, 'making up your own stuff' is not considered a worthwhile contribution to training and, as the coach has the ultimate power of dropping a player from a team, rarely does 'making up stuff' happen.

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[15] A 'low chop' is a tackle made around the lower legs or chopping the legs from under the tackled player as if felling a tree.

The choreographed moves, the naming of roles and the discipline are all taken onto the playing field. 'Robots' is the description given to them by opposition teams.[16] The autocratic, rote-learning nature of the training certainly evokes images of militaristic manoeuvers. Rugby commentator Spiros Zavos's observation that many of the metaphors of rugby have connotations of war (players kick 'bombs' and 'torpedos') comes to mind when watching training sessions. They fire off 'bullet passes'. Halfbacks 'snipe down the flanks'. The ball is 'killed' in rucks. Teams play for 'position' and 'territory'. Defenders make 'big hits'. Props are 'built like tanks'. There are 'forward drives' and 'aerial attacks' (Zavos 2013).

I asked Jack about the traditional style of coaching that is employed at SUFC and he remarked that it was 'all well and good for people to suggest others ways of coaching, but they didn't have the pressure to keep the winning record of the club intact'. This style of coaching gave him greater control over the match results. 'Anyway' he explained, 'this style of coaching is working, we are the most competitive team in the competition'.

When asked what made a successful team, the players responded that communication, teamwork, cohesion, awareness and skills were the most important factors. It is interesting, that apart from 'skills', training did not address the elements the players believed were important. Former Wallabies' coach, Ewen McKenzie, believes that it is time on the field, not training, that enables players to develop team work and decision-making, 'I think that's the instinctive part of the game that you develop over time. You can't say 'don't kick' or 'kick'. You've got to feel the moment and that's experience' (Smith 2014).

There is a contradiction in this method of training. I watched players rehearsing set plays against an unseen opposition, where coaches predetermined how the other team would play. I am aware that the coaches and players have access to video recordings of games and that each team has a particular style of play, yet the game of rugby is never entirely

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[16] This description was repeated on many occasions when talking socially to players from other teams. When pressed, the players said this description related to the harsh training regime that their friends in SUFC spoke about.

predictable: the ball can bounce in unforeseen ways, players miss tackles and kicks are not always precise. Training, I would argue, is attempting to control the uncontrollable. Talking to an injured player on the sideline during a practice, he mentioned that he believed the Colts lost against another team because the opposition team had been able to disrupt the Colts' moves; 'our team just didn't know what to do because our set moves had been foiled'.

Light's (2001b) research with rugby players from an elite school in Brisbane examined the impact that competing game styles—the structured rugby encouraged by the coaches and the open rugby the players wanted to play—had on training. He found, as I have been intimating, that there was a schism between how the players wanted to play and how they were trained. Open rugby, Light maintains, required players to use 'intuition, creativity, communication, player autonomy and risk taking' (2001b: 277), which was at odds with the traditional structured style of training in which the players involved in his study were engaged. The dichotomy in style of play and training, Light argues, led to the team suffering a number of losses and reverting to the traditional structured game play in order to win games.

The training conducted at the Brisbane school, by Light's account, was very similar to the training at SUFC and trainings I have observed at various clubs and schools in Sydney. I would contend that it is the emphasis on success that Jack spoke about that sees this autocratic style of training continuing in highly competitive teams. Playing like a pillock is not an option.

3.7   Conclusion

It is evident, from the observations in this chapter, that the core of the Colts training is skills development. The repeated drills, week after week, year after year are employed to reinforce attacking and defending body positions and ball handling—drills that have, in some cases, been in the coaching repertoire for almost a century. The training is disciplined, the coaches have a clear plan for each session, and the players know what is expected of them. Traditional top-down coaching continued to be the *modus operandi*

with players having little input into training or game plans, apart from putting their bodies on the line. Conversations with the players provided strong evidence that there was a belief that training was the way to win games and the way to become a more proficient player. There was a keen sense of camaraderie at the training sessions, with players urging others on when energy was flagging. However, the one area of the game that is not explicitly trained is its improvisational aspect; the area where awareness, intuition and risk-taking are required qualities. The coaches, when asked, held the belief that these qualities could not be taught; that a player either 'has it' or doesn't.

I would assert that this belief is based on an overly simplified view of how bodily knowledge is acquired. I am certainly not denying that the rugby players need to be able to withstand a tackle, or pass and catch a ball with precision but, if this is the only form of knowledge being transferred, then other modes of being also integral to playing rugby are neglected. Yet, if training regimes are believed to provide successful outcomes, and in SUFC's case there is no doubt that they do, why would players and coaches look to develop, perceived, untrainable skills? I would suggest that only training the obvious skills required of the game limits the scope and style of playing and each player's bodily repertoire. Chapter Five will explore whether players, once exposed to a different form of training, will agree that the instinctive part of the game could be a more explicit element of training.

Before embarking on an exploration of the actor movement workshops with the rugby union players, Chapter Four sets the scene by providing an overview of the training methods that inspired this thesis. It highlights the type of bodily knowledge that performers attain through these training methods and illustrates a range of pedagogical differences between actor movement training and rugby training.

CHAPTER FOUR: A Shift of Viewpoint

4.1   Introduction

As the conclusion of the previous chapter noted, this chapter serves as an overview of the training practices, and in particular Viewpoints, upon which I drew in the workshops with the Colts players to be described in the Chapter Five. This is done to highlight a number of philosophical and pedagogical differences between performance training and rugby union training. It points to the conflicts of ideology and logics of practice that I faced when drawing on these training techniques outside the rehearsal room.

There are a number of activities of whose genesis I have no knowledge—I have picked them up at workshops, read about them in books, seen them employed by directors. However, all the activities have the common thread of employing the body rather than speech and psychology as a means of developing performers' ability to 'make the whole body speak even when one keeps silent' (Suzuki quoted in Zarrilli 1995: 78). The other unifying factor is that the exercises encourage individuals to become attuned to the articulations of their own body and how one body influences and impacts on others, the space, the rhythms, the dynamics, the decisions. Having no formal knowledge of the concept of phenomenology at the time of collecting these exercises, with hindsight it appears that I have embraced a phenomenological approach in my teaching. It is the lived bodies of my students and how their 'bodies encounter the world and its matter, re-inventing it, as it were, on a moment-by-moment basis' (Murray and Keefe 2007: 25) that interests me.

4.2   Grotowski's influence

Throughout my work as a theatre practitioner, a concept that I have been drawn to is present-ness, which I would define as an acute awareness of the present moment. This notion influenced my search for other training methods that encourage performers to commit to the 'now'. In particular, Grotowski's notion of the actor as hunter piqued my interest.

The hunter knows that he does not know what is going to happen, and this is one of the greatest attractions of his occupation. Thus he needs to prepare an attention of a different and superior style – an attention which does not consist in riveting itself on the presumed but consists precisely in not presuming anything and in avoiding inattentiveness. It is a 'universal' attention, which does not inscribe itself on any point and tries to be on all points. There is a magnificent term for this, one that still conserves all its zest of vivacity and imminence: alertness. (quoted in Slowiak and Cuesta 2007: 127)

Grotowski's stick exercises[17] used to develop alertness and attentiveness, in my experience, do just that. I have had classes with students tossing sticks, in what would appear to an onlooker as chaos, in different directions and at different times with complete attention to the randomness of the present moment. They are challenging exercises on many levels and, apart from developing alertness, also build trust, stamina and an acute awareness of spatial dynamics. I used these exercises a number of times with the rugby union players for exactly those reasons.

I discovered Grotowski before I was introduced to Bogart but, when I became aware of Bogart, I was immediately struck by the similarities in training methods between both practitioners and their view that training was an imperative for actors. My experience of Bogart's flow exercise, described later in the chapter, echoes Grotowski's 'attention to space exercise', in which he describes performers moving around the space as 'being like swallows flying in groups of hundreds in the sky, never colliding' (quoted in Slowiak and Cuesta 2007: 127).

Grotowski's rejection of training that taught technique such as acrobatics, mime or dance steps, because it trapped the body, was another idea that interested me. He argued:

If only some movements are perfected, then all the others remain underdeveloped. The body is not freed. The body is tamed ... What must be done is to free the body, not just train certain areas. (quoted in Slowiak and Cuesta 2007: 129)

The exercises Grotowski named *'les plastiques et corporels'* aimed to 'untame' the body by assisting actors to rid themselves of habitual movement patterns. These exercises

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[17] Sticks are thrown randomly between participants as if they are hot potatoes. The number of sticks and the pace of moving increases as the exercise continues. The sticks should never fall on the floor.

became an integral aspect of my teaching and directing, and became extremely pertinent to the workshops with the rugby players, as I attempted to 'untame' their bodies.

4.3   The Viewpoints

It is, however, Bogart's Viewpoints training that has most powerfully influenced my recent teaching practice. My introduction to Bogart's Viewpoints, as I pointed out in the Introduction, began when choreographer Samantha Chester ran Viewpoints workshops with my secondary drama students in 2009. It was not until I undertook my own Viewpoints training that I realised its potential for awakening perceptual awareness.

Many Western acting theories place the actor's self at the centre of training. Auslander makes the point:

> Stanislavski, Brecht, Grotowski all implicitly designate the actor's self as the *logos* of performance; all assume the actor's self precedes and grounds her performance and that it is the presence of this self in performance that provides the audience with access to human truths. (1995: 60 italics original)

Bogart moves away from this view. For Bogart, it is the relationships and reactions to others that should be the primary concern of actor training. She rails against the solipsism of contemporary North America where decisions are 'governed by commodities and consumption' (Bogart 2005: 31) and the overarching paradigm is an 'arrogant culture of self' (2005: 29). Her training methods encourage participants to gain a world perspective and break habitual and 'acculturated ways of seeing' (2005: 31).

For Bogart there is a universality of human experience, but she does not want either a performer or audience to be complacent and accepting of established habits and desires. Rather than having a limited view of the 'self', Viewpoints asks the performer to break free of the patterns and constructs of a habitual self. She believes it is the role of the artist to work against the status quo and do what society perceives to be impossible; to collaborate to reignite connection and to celebrate our shared existence (Bogart 2007).

Viewpoints training is always conducted as a group. Although the training brings individual awareness it is never done in isolation. The premise of Viewpoints training

comes out of this drive towards connection where individuals are working with and against each other to create meaning.

Kelly Maurer, a long-term member of the SITI Company[18] makes the point that:

> because you know that everybody in the event is experiencing the same thing, you immediately are solidified. The responsibility that you feel not only for your own little performance but for making sure your fellow players are ok and that the event collectively comes together and works is really enormous. It immediately becomes a very cohesive organism. (quoted in Coen 1995: 34)

I have watched cohesion grow in classes and casts in which I have used Viewpoints. The training has the ability to place everyone on an equal footing no matter what performance experience level you have attained. The framework of shared, rather than individual, experience is at the core of Bogart's philosophy.

This concept plays out in the training where individual Viewpoints of Time (tempo, duration, kinesthetic response and repetition) and Space (shape, gesture, architecture, spatial relationship and topography) are used together to create a 'whole'. Each individual Viewpoint is unique, as is each individual involved in the training, but it is only in the coming together of the elements that 'endlessly new currents of vital life-force, emotional vicissitudes and connection with other actors' will occur (Bogart 2001: 46).

Where many actor-training systems focus on the individual skills of the performer, Viewpoints does not purport to develop the actor's 'instrument'. There is no discussion in Viewpoints training of the 'neutral body' or of 'pure movement'. The training does not seek to make sense of an action; in contrast, the training 'lets action occur' on stage, rather than *making* it occur. In Viewpoints training the 'source for action and invention comes to us from others and from the physical world around us' (Bogart 2005: 19). Other actors are 'the path out – their breath, their bodies. You become them in that sense' explains Ellen Lauren another member of Bogart's SITI company (quoted in Coen 1995: 32).

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[18] SITI was a performance company created by Anne Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki. Members of the company are trained in both Viewpoints and the Suzuki technique and use the techniques when creating performance work.

Actors are trained to look at themselves through an outside lens, to become 'hyper-conscious' rather than 'self conscious' (Bogart 2005: 60); with that, Bogart asserts, comes freedom. This 'hyper-consciousness' is not based in psychology, but is borne out of the body being used as a conduit for understanding. Listening with your 'whole body' is a dictum that pervades both the Viewpoints book and Viewpoints training. Bogart calls this 'exquisite listening' (2005: 32) where the body works instinctively and kinesthetically to develop an understanding of self in relation to others, the working space, the playing space and the outside world. 'Everybody present can respond instantly, bypassing the frontal lobe of the brain in order to act upon instinct and intuition' (2005: 33). Bogart denies that this form of training subjugates the mind by the presence of the body. Rather, she claims that by utilising the body the actor is free to create a psychological life for a character. There is a time for 'left-brain activity' but 'not in the heat of discovery and not in front of the audience' (Bogart 2001: 53).

Eelka Lampe in her paper 'From the Battle to the Gift: The Directing of Anne Bogart' explains that 'the external does not amplify the internal but coincides with it, possibly contradicting it' (1992: 22). The actor must learn to let go of 'restrictive investments of self in order to respond to each moment' (1992: 23). While participating in Viewpoints training Bogart states, 'it is impossible not to think' (2005: 60) but the objective is to train actors to exercise the side of the brain that responds to kinesthetic rather than psychological circumstances; an embodied consciousness. Performers are asked in Viewpoints training to develop a 'deep responsiveness to the world around' (Lampe 1997: 106). Lampe's words here resonate with those of the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty: '[t]he world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world' (1962: xviii). Indeed, as Ravid argues, 'Viewpoints technique is fundamentally based on an acutely defined phenomenological way of perceiving the world and being-in-the world' (2008: 1).

This mirrors my own experience with Viewpoints as both a participant and a facilitator. The training is an 'organic' process, one in which there is no sense of 'having to get it right' or 'having to do something'. It involves, as Zarrilli describes, being 'responsive to the demands of the particular moment within a specific environment' (2007: 638), 'ready to leap and act' (2007: 645) or, as Bogart states, the performer must be prepared to

'listen, receive, respond' (2005: 62). It involves being in tune with what is happening around you, and adapting intuitively or being in a state of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1999).

Two fieldnotes written after participating in Viewpoints workshops reflect the above point.

> One:
> *I am standing still, picturing my body in the space in which it is currently occupying; then my body in relation to the other sixteen people standing on the floor of the room; then my awareness is taken to the larger space of the converted warehouse; then outside the building; then in relation to Sydney; Australia and finally the world. My body has become an infinitesimal speck that is part of this thing called earth. My awareness gradually zooms in and as if coming back from an astro-travelling dream my body jolts into the present moment. I have been both me and outside me, aware of myself but acutely aware of my body's relationship to others and the outside world.*(30 January 2010)

> Two:
> *Bodies moving. Straight lines, diagonals, circles. Interweaving bodies walking, running, skipping. Stillness. An imperceptible gesture repeated, copied that expands and contracts and disappears as another is awakened. Contrapuntal rhythms fading in and out. This group of twenty bodies tangle, separate become twos, threes, fives, one. Fleeting relationships that intercept and dissolve holding no sway over each other. Each step anew, an action not known until it arrives and then understood. Silence bar the feet on the floor or breath of air from lungs; sounds that make bodies turn or flee or touch. My eyes are soft, taking in what the space has to offer. My ears on high alert, listening. My body twitches its languid tempo disrupted by the rush of another body sprinting across the space. Bodies shaping the dynamics of the space, the space shaping the dynamics of the bodies. These bodies need no words to communicate, but with each moving present read the intricacies of the space they temporally inhabit.* (16 February 2013)

The actor involved in Viewpoints training is not weighed down by what Bogart describes as the 'shackles of ultrarealistic' actor training that is a legacy of the Americanisation of

Stanislavski's system (2005: 16), in which an actor needs to 'feel it' (2005: 16). She argues that this in no way lessens the power of the moment; on the contrary, Bogart claims, it gives freedom to the actor to be truly 'in the moment' without fear of distorting or narrowing an emotional state. Bogart takes this further by acknowledging that the body's reactions are intertwined with memory and learned responses (Bogart: 2011). It is not only the 'lived' embodied experience of the present; this 'lived' experience 'connects the performer with the past' (2001: 22); another echo of the phenomenological leanings of Viewpoints.

In my experience it is a continual surprise and delight that the training enables participants to work together without discord or hesitation. Being on the floor at a Viewpoints training session forces an acute awareness of the surroundings, of the miniscule nuances of movement, breath, sound. The training forces you to let go of your own agenda, which although frightening, is also liberating. There is an understanding that working with 'fearlessness, abandon and an open heart' (Bogart 2005: 204) can create exciting possibilities. At the four Viewpoints workshops I attended between 2009 and 2013 trainer Laura Sheedy summed up the experience of Viewpoints as '100% commitment to the now and 100% openness to change'.

Bogart carries this concept through in her approach to Viewpoints. She notes that she has had to 'continually re-examine and reshape the technique so that it didn't become a rigid technique' (2005: xi). Bogart and Landau comment that *The Viewpoints Book* should not be read as a 'prescriptive instruction manual, but rather as an array of possibilities, a call to further examination and personalisation on the part of the reader' (2005: x). For Bogart the task of theatre is to create new paradigms by 're-describing our inherited assumptions and invented fictions' (Bogart 2001: 28).

Bogart (2001) unashamedly admits to 'stealing' concepts and techniques from a variety of sources: Grotowski, Brecht, Tai Chi, Aikido, and Merce Cunningham. She is interested in how techniques speak to each other and how something new emerges from the dialogue and explains that the 'the shoulders upon which I stand feel sturdy' (2001: 41) and have led her to 'new ways of thinking about acting, playwriting and design' (2001: 41). This

premise is reiterated in her 2007 book *And Then You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World* where Bogart states:

> The art of theater is about living outside your own skin and identifying with the ancestors who empower you to speak. We are asked to stand up in the present moment and to speak courageously for those who came before, to speak against the familiar currents. (2007: 29)

Throughout the twenty-first century there is a history of practitioners seeking innovative or alternative solutions to the training of actors and in the process push the boundaries of theatre.

It will become clear, as the next chapter unfolds, that I have taken this approach to the workshops but rather than pushing the boundaries of theatre I was attempting to disrupt the paradigms and assumptions within the field of rugby union.

4.4   Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight certain principles embedded in the style of movement-based training developed in theatre and applied to the workshops with the rugby union players. There are clear connections between movement training and rugby union training in that they both aim to shape the efficiency, strength and resilience of participant bodies. Repetition, discipline and commitment permeate both training practices, as do the elements of time and space and collective work is the central focus. However there is a divergence in the logic of practice between performance training and rugby union training outlined in Chapter Three. A key difference arises from the fact that performance training is also about discovery, about faltering, about sharing, about testing, about improvisation and most importantly about attentiveness to the lived experience of 'inhabiting time and space' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 161). In essence movement training works in the present moment while rugby union works towards the future.

Unlike rugby union training, where the players are often 'merely a conduit' (Murray and Keefe 2007: 137) for the coaches' ideas, in movement training there is an expectation that all performers will take a role in the decision making process which, in turn, develops

a 'common spirit between every member of the group' (2007: 137). The structure of the movement-based trainings, therefore, requires trainers to take on a role of facilitator rather than director. Telling participants 'what to do' or 'how to do it' is a rarity; rather, it is more common for a trainer to encourage personal and group discoveries.

Again, unlike rugby union training, 'hard' evidence is not the primary source of information for understanding how participants are responding to the movement-based training described in this chapter. Discussions, observations and personal feedback, from participants and facilitators, form the basis of understanding as to the outcome of a Viewpoints training session. This approach is in stark contrast to that of rugby union training.

These core ideological and practical differences had significant implications, for the players and for myself, in the Viewpoints-inspired workshops as will be seen in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: That Spatial Shit

5.1   Introduction

The twenty training sessions, each of forty-five minutes, described in this chapter took place during the 2012 season and the 2013 pre-season. Almost all the sessions were held in Sydney University's Old Teachers College Drama studio, a space of approximately 118 square metres, which is about a seventh of the size of a rugby field. It has a wooden floor, large windows with dark curtains, a piano, mirror, white board and chairs and tables. I chose to work indoors primarily to differentiate my training from the players' regular training sessions.

Each week I arrived early and prepared the room: I hid the piano with a stack of chairs, all other chairs were stacked and moved to the side; I covered the mirror with the white board. I like to teach in an uncluttered space, believing that this is one strategy for encouraging attention to task. It is also a way of maximising the working space and having taught young men a number of times during my teaching career, there was another reason for tidying the space; limit distractions.

The first week the players follow me to the space but subsequently the players found their own way to the room and always arrived promptly at 5.15 pm, sweaty from a strength and conditioning training session. As they walked into the room some downed brown-coloured protein shakes; others drank water. After the initial session, they knew where to put their bags, as a result, each week the chairs and table on the side of the room became littered with sports bags, drink bottles and tracksuit tops.

I began each session by asking the players to stand in a circle in order to explain explicitly what I hoped to achieve in the session. The circle, like the players pre-training circle, is a type of ritual; a time to come together as a group, a moment when everyone is, simultaneously, exposed and united. They were very polite young men and each week, after I introduced the session, stood and waited for instructions.

The general premise of my thesis – that actor movement training methods could train rugby union players to develop other body techniques that may enhance their playing — is explained at the first session. There is no comment about this. All the players have witnessed me standing by the sideline during their training sessions, so although what I am doing is new, I am not.

Throughout the sessions I asked the players to make the leaps about how the activities may be relevant to their rugby playing. Some are vocal, some very quiet. I often used the 'pick a random student' questioning technique, in an attempt to elicit information from the less forthcoming players. By the end of all the sessions, whenever I asked about relevance, the standard reply became 'spatial awareness'. As I note later, this expression became a new phrase in their rugby vernacular.

5.2   This sensing stuff

> *I am dwarfed by many of the players who are not only tall but have strong sculpted bodies. Even in their relaxed standing position they are imposing young men. I will my body to energise, to transform, in Eugenio Barba's terms, from daily to extra daily performance mode. I may be in a drama studio, a space in which I feel comfortable, but I am on high alert surrounded by these non-drama bodies that fill the space. Acutely conscious at this moment of being both an insider and an outsider, I begin.* (18 January 2013)

At the initial session, I decided to introduce the concept of kinesthetic response. It is one of Bogart's nine viewpoints and, after reading Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind* in which he describes sporting bodies, in particular elite sports participants, as being highly kinesthetically intelligent (2011), I believed this would be an effective starting place. I asked the players if they could offer a definition of kinesthetic response. Blank looks, until someone proffered 'Isn't that when your body reacts to something? Like if someone walks by you and your body reacts'. A few head nods filtered around the circle.

In explicitly Bogartian terms, I explained that any decision to move was to be a 'spontaneous reaction to movement outside themselves' (Bogart 2005: 42). This

meant that the players, as they moved around the space, were to allow other bodies in the room to affect their own movement, rather than initiating movement themselves. I added that the exercise was to be done in silence. I asked them to keep their eyes up and not focus on anything in particular, but to let their eyes take in as much of the environment as they were able, without turning their heads. This is the 'soft focus' I described at the beginning of Chapter Three, the 'physical state in which we allow the eyes to soften and relax so that rather than looking at one or two things in sharp focus, they can now take in many [...] taking the pressure off the eyes to be the dominant and primary information gatherer [to enable] the whole body to listen and gather information in new and more sensitised ways' (Bogart 2005: 31).

> *The players walk randomly around the space. I watch them bunching as if they are being sucked into the centre of the room. (One of the props describes this later in the session as the 'rucking vortex'; a phenomenon where all players are drawn to the tackled player despite other opportunities being available.) I ask them to use the entire space and, as if the magnetic force has been turned off, they begin spreading out and filling the space. Some of the players are concentrating on the task; others appear nonplussed, raising eyebrows at each other as they pass by. I remind them to keep their eyes up, to explore the entire space and to respond to those around them. I talk about the air between the bodies, the sensations that they feel as they pass another player, the windows of space that are created as they move around the room, of sensing with the entire body. I catch myself thinking about those words and how, away from the context of creative play, they sound loaded with artistic pretention. I block the thought. I let the activity continue. I know from my own experience that it takes time to get into the zone, to let go and be open to the surroundings, to suppress the 'this looks ridiculous' thoughts. A general murmur begins to permeate the room and I remind the players that the activity is to be done in silence. More raised eyebrows and bumping. A number of players begin circling the space with march-like precision. I consider stopping the activity but decide to push it further in the hope that those who are unsure will begin to find the focus required of this activity. However, the opposite*

occurs and the focused players become distracted, further distracting the already distracted players. I stop the activity. (18 January 2013)

At the conclusion of this first exercise the players reflected on their lack of concentration, the difficulty of remaining silent, and of not having a specific pattern to guide their movement. The absence of focus had caught me by surprise, as I had watched their disciplined behaviour at training sessions and had assumed, or expected, that it would transfer to the workshops. When asked, the players pointed to what they perceived as the lack of purpose, the strangeness of the activity, and not entirely understanding what they were supposed to be doing. The general restlessness in the room during the discussion made me aware that if I did not work to draw them in, the next nineteen sessions to which I had committed could be, at the very least, difficult. I changed tack and turned to an activity I had successfully used with the Wallabies: one that still explored kinesthetic response, but did so in a less amorphous way.

I asked seven players to stand, at random, in the space and to close their eyes. Another seven players were then asked to stand about ten centimeters behind the ones with their eyes closed. I explained that eyes could only be opened when they 'sensed' that someone was behind them. Once again there was to be no talking.

> *The observers and I wait and watch and wait and watch; a minute goes by and not one player has opened his eyes. I stop the exercise and the players talk over each other. 'I couldn't feel anyone.' 'No one was behind me.' 'That's hard.' 'How didn't I feel them?' The players swap and now they know the drill this new group is convinced they will be more successful. Once again there is a group of players in the middle of the room with their eyes closed. The final group has determined looks. They stand with their eyes closed but the focus and concentration is evident in their bodies. Seven other players creep silently into their positions and stand rock-still. A moment passes and when an eyes-closed player asks if the players are in position everyone laughs. I stop the activity.* (18 January 2013)

The players were surprised at their inability to sense another player. Gathered in a circle at the end of the activity, the players conjectured as to the reason they were not able to

feel the person behind them. 'We are so used to looking forward that we don't think about our back', said one. 'We don't have to know who's behind us', called another. Another countered '[But] it could be good if we did.' 'We are used to having people call to us and tell us they are behind us.' 'We don't need this sense stuff', a bored looking player interjected. '[But] it could be good if we did', someone responded again. 'Yes, we could use it in the scrum.' 'Yeah, and the line-out.' 'We're not very good at sensing are we?' commented another. In an attempt to 'awaken their backs', at their behest, the exercise was repeated a number of times.

5.3   Encoded bodily behaviour

The kinetic world created and inhabited on the rugby field and at training had led the players to acquire a 'certain way of moving' (Sheets-Johnstone 2011: 424). Over years of training, players harden their bodies for the combative, aggressive and physically taxing aspects of the sport; they tackle with force and precision, they catch the ball being passed, they run with speed and agility, scrums are held in dynamic tension through the combined strength of 32 hyper-muscled legs, backs, arms. The training, as described in Chapter Three, is marked by regulations of time and space, repetition and discipline, where correct execution is paramount to skill development, refashioning the players' bodily dispositions. Training sedimented knowledge and values into the individual's bodily schema, their habitus, enabling them to function successfully into their particular field of sport (Light, 2001b; Crossley 2001, 2004; Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2007; Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2010). 'Sensing stuff' was not included in their rugby playing 'repertoire of possible actions and reactions' (Wacquant 2006: 156). It is no surprise then that the players struggled to feel the person behind them, nothing in their training had developed such an ability.

This point was further emphasised in a subsequent session, when the players engaged in an exercise, adapted from a Grotowski stick exercise mentioned in the Chapter Four, intended to develop present-ness, impulse and group awareness. Using balls rather than sticks—sticks had been used in a previous session where lack of attention had seen a player nearly lose an eye so, for health and safety reasons this session, I used balls—it

begins with one ball being tossed amongst the group of participants, then more balls are added until the number of balls equals the number of players. The players were aware that there was to be no pattern to the ball throwing and, again, no talking.

> *There are fifteen players throwing one ball around. I ask them to keep moving around the space as the ball is being thrown. They carelessly toss the ball to each other and it is caught effortlessly. There is fluidity in the players' movements. Another ball is introduced and the exercise becomes a series of dropped balls. The pattern of behaviour is repeated with the other fifteen players who have been observers. They ask if they can try it again. They go into a group huddle and urge each other to concentrate and focus. There is greater success with a third ball introduced. I remind them of soft focus and reacting to the moment. They are momentarily successful but after once again a series of dropped balls, they toss the balls away in frustration.* (28 February 2013)

When asked why they found this exercise so difficult, the players once again talked about 'having no pattern', 'not being able to talk', 'lack of concentration', 'not knowing which direction the balls were coming from', 'not working as a team'. All were surprised that they had not succeeded; after all, as one player commented, 'throwing balls around is what we are trained to do'. Indeed, before the exercise began, I had referred to my observation of the way in which, prior to every regular training session, the players 'played' with balls: circles of players tossed a ball to one another, all bodies at ease, a ball rarely dropped, the rhythm undisturbed as the circle seamlessly expanded when a new player joined. Before the players donned their training bodies they were reacting in a spontaneous fashion, staying 'sensorially and perceptually alert and in the moment' (Zarrilli, 2009: 49). That, they told me, was 'just mucking around'.

What the players were trained to do, and what they did so effortlessly in their pre-training circles was to toss *one* ball around; introducing more balls disturbed this conditioned bodily behaviour. Further, given that vocality is fundamental to being a rugby player—'If you don't talk you shouldn't be playing rugby'; 'more talk boys, more talk'; 'you've got to be vocal'—being told not to talk had the potential to disable their grip on an activity. This exercise certainly did appear to disable, quite literally, their grip on the ball.

Further, rugby players are habituated to a particular regulation of space. The playing field is conceptualised in terms of 'channels' along which play proceeds; movement and perception is characteristically oriented 'forwards', with players inculcated into a straight-ahead view of the game. They are commanded to 'eyeball' their opposite number, only directing their gaze laterally when passing the ball, even then only darting a quick glimpse to the right or left to ensure another player is ready to receive the ball. This forward-looking perception has become the players' specific way of knowing; it is therefore not surprising that an exercise requiring the players to open their field of vision to 360° created difficulty. These observations confirm Light and Evans' conclusions that contemporary rugby training regimes reduced the players' ability to 'anticipate, make decisions and be creative' (2010: 108). Crease and Lutterbie also shed light on this by explaining that 'acquiring a new technique reconstitutes and redirects our bodies, it rechannels our energy flow – and in the process, while certain ways of interplay become newly possible, certain others become more difficult or even impossible' (2009:177).

The purpose of many of the exercises I employed throughout the workshops was, precisely, to disrupt these 'encoded techniques' (Zarrilli 1995: 132) and highlight to the players that their bodies were more than 'streamlined body projectiles' (Eichberg 1998: 152). I often used a blindfold as a means to these ends. As the players are trained to rely on their vision, I reasoned that cutting off that sense would encourage the players to 'listen with their whole body' (Bogart 2005: 32) and make their 'senses react more sharply' (Hodge 2010: 279).

The first use of blindfolds created great hilarity. 'Are we going to do some kinky stuff?'; the entire group guffawed. The players did, however, understand my intention: 'means I really have to listen', 'really have to concentrate', 'got to feel it', 'spatial awareness!' I asked two of the players to crouch down and the other three to remain standing. The instructions were that the players could move up or down at any time, but the group must attempt to maintain the three up and two down configuration, 'We can't talk?' questioned one of the players. 'No,' I replied, 'you can't talk.'

The players begin. They move up and down. The onlookers jovially chide when all of the volunteers crouch together or there is one lone player standing. I stop the activity and another group of five jumps up. One player holds his hands out so he can feel when the other players move. The players are concentrating trying to hear or feel any movement. The onlookers are silent momentarily until one of the five players begins to move up and down continuously perhaps hoping that at some time he will be in the correct position. The final group has determined looks. They focus, they concentrate and for a few moments they successfully keep the three up and two down combination. I stop them when they are in this configuration as a way of congratulating them on their effort. (24 January 2013)

I once again brought the players back to a circle and asked them to comment on the activity. 'It is much harder than I thought it would be', remarked one. 'Can actors do this?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'on the whole, the actors I have worked with and the ones I have observed are pretty good at this sensing stuff.'

Perhaps a particular untested syllogism has underpinned thinking about sport: an assumption that because sport is a 'sensing and sensuous activity' (Hockey and Collinson 2007: 116), that uses 'haptic resources' (Hockey and Collinson 2007: 123) and requires a 'somatic mode of attention' (Csordas 1993: 138) to tune into the constantly changing environment, then sporting bodies must have highly developed sensory perception. But, as I discovered at this and other training sessions, 'having the ability to use one's body in a highly differentiated and skilled way' (Gardner 2011: 273) does not equate to using the full spectrum of kinesthetic perception available.

The players initially struggled to activate senses other than sight but, as the workshops continued, it became evident that their conditioned bodily behaviours were indeed being expanded, if only momentarily. The following field note is indicative of this:

I explain to the players that the exercise they are about to embark on looks easy but can be quite difficult. Groups of ten players are to stand in a line and without talking or signaling they must find a collective moment to begin walking across the space to the cones I have put in place. They must keep together at all times. 'Do

we have to have our eyes closed?' I am asked. 'No', I respond, 'this time you can keep your eyes open.' I explain that they need to keep their eyes up so they can keep all the other players in the line in their periphery.

A moment is spent reacquainting the players with the difference between looking fixedly at some object and looking 'softly'. They focus and refocus their eyes as a way of practicing.

The ten players are spread about arms-length apart. The first group begins. Everyone starts at different times. I ask them to start again. Next time one player takes a big step as a signal to the others to begin. I send them back. I reiterate the soft eyes and ask them to attempt to 'sense' all players in the line. They collect themselves and begin again. This time there is a concerted effort to find the group impulse. I let them walk down the field as I can see that they are really trying to hold the line. They get to the end and say to the next group 'It's really hard.' The next group gets into position; someone calls 'We can do this.' The concentration is palpable. They focus; they stiffen their bodies to hold themselves back. Finally the impulse propels them forward and they walk up the space holding the line. 'We sensed it' a player calls, when they reach their destination. (14 March 2013)

The players were as excited about their success as I was. They had reoriented themselves to the moment at hand and had achieved a 'perceptive attention to the spatial, temporal, and/or energic aspects of movement' (Sheets-Johnstone 2011: 517). Perceptual awareness had been attuned at that particular moment and the players displayed their excitement with achieving this by much back patting and clapping.

Crossley maintains that by learning a new skill human beings can 'break the circle between habitus and practice' and 'thus transcend their existing repertoire of habits' (2004: 52). Acquiring a new skill, according to Sheets-Johnstone, requires the putting aside of the 'retinue of meaning and values' (2011: 130) of habitual movements. When in unfamiliar movement territory, the players felt strange but, as Sheets-Johnstone argues, 'by making the familiar strange, we familiarise ourselves anew with the familiar' (2011: 123).

5.4   Spatial Awareness

What these workshops also point to is that examining assumptions is another key to potential new knowledge. The veracity of this statement played out when I discussed the concept of 'space' with the players.

On the sideline of one of the rugby union training sessions I chatted to the coach of the Third Grade senior team. He spoke eloquently of space on the rugby field, and said that he was often surprised that players only had one concept of spatial possibilities: the gap between players. He gave me a list of spatial possibilities; above, below, in front, behind, beside, wide, small, and the space that was currently being filled by the player. I had heard the words 'take space', 'find the space', 'get into space' on innumerable occasions when observing training. I made the assumption therefore that the players had, like the coach, a well-developed understanding of space. This, as I discovered at one of the sessions, was not the case.

'When it comes to space on the rugby field, what do you think of?' I questioned the players at the beginning of a session. 'The gap between opposition players', calls one of the players and there is a collective grunt of agreement from the others in the room. 'Is there any other space, other than the gap between the players?' I continued. The group looks bewildered so I prompted 'What about the space above you? Or below you?' Words are tossed out: 'wide', 'behind', 'next to'. One player added to the list by remarking, 'actually the space is everywhere.' A moment of silenced ensued as the others took this in. 'Is there any advantage to seeing space as more than 'a gap', or realising that empty space is not a void?' I ventured, attempting to provoke further discussion. 'Yeh, gives you more options.' 'Could help with decision making, like making a decision to kick or not.' 'Means you don't have to just look for the space in front of you.'

In hindsight, I wished I had asked these questions at the first session when the players had been instructed to move randomly around the space. I had wanted the players to experience the concept that moving through space had endless possibilities and

dynamics but, although the players, like me, had heard from their coaches on endless occasions to 'find the space', to 'take space, take space, take space'; to 'go out wide', to 'keep it tight', their dominant concept of space was the gap between the players: the gap that either had to be run through or closed up. The players and coaches seem to consider space as a static object that can be found and then taken, rather than understanding space as a dynamic 'ever expanding present' (Sheets-Johnstone 2011: 422). The players had a 'taken for granted' concept of space and had failed to recognise other possibilities. I had taken for granted that the players understood the dynamics of space. With the re-evaluation of our assumptions about 'space', a new energy permeated the room during the activity that followed the discussion, as the following fieldnote highlights:

> *In the dance studio, mirrors on all walls, the players are experimenting with space. The players are playing around, expanding their bodies filling the space, contracting it to take up less space, walking into a space that another player has just exited, moving to space that is filled by no-one. They join with others and continue moving, they line up and expand and contract to stop another player moving through the line, they form a figure eight and run between each other, they follow each other tracing each other's path in the space. Some do it with conviction others are half-hearted. They walk in straight lines, curves, on a grid. Negotiating activities in silence raises the stakes. I watch as players move together to create the shapes I call out: a square, a circle, a triangle ('Equilateral or isosceles?' a quick-witted player asks). They make decisions quickly and readjust if readjustment is required. They play with the size. They groan collectively when one player hasn't quite worked out his position in the shape. It becomes a competition between groups to be the first into the shape. The players themselves have raised the stakes higher. And always: 'Did you see that spatial awareness!'*
> (14 March 2013)

The players were beginning to acknowledge the concepts behind the workshops. As the players moved around the space, their sensory modality had become enlivened. This exercise 'provided a practical, experiential means of attuning perceptual awareness' (Zarrilli 2009: 49). Similar to the 'electricity moment' in the Wallabies training outlined

earlier, this moment was a 'power-like spark[s] with [its] own creative force' (Bachelard quoted in Casey 2008: 31), surprising for the possibilities it invoked.

5.5   Not Real Training

The training I conducted with the players was in complete contrast to their usual training sessions, not only in the activities in which they were engaged, but also in its student-centredness. 'Real training', a term the players used when referring to rugby skills training, is goal-directed, characterised by what Frederick Alexander would describe as 'end-gaining' (1969: 118): a way of moving whereby attention is only paid to the result, rather than the process.[19] When gaining territory and scoring tries is the prime focus of a rugby game, this goal-directed movement feels right, familiar, comfortable; the movement I am asking them to do does not. 'Knowing your role', as I pointed out in Chapter Three, is another dictum of 'real training': 'You all know your roles' and 'stay disciplined to your roles' are reiterated, mantra-like, throughout training sessions. The players shout out their role in drills: 'I've got ten!' 'I'm shadow!' 'I'm lead!' 'I've got D!'

The players were required to be flexible with their roles at the workshop sessions. They also had the opportunity to play with structure. Rather than there being a 'right way' of performing an activity, the players were encouraged to respond to the dynamics of the moment; to allow themselves to be shaped by the 'evolving, changing situation' (Sheets-Johnstone 2011: 424). The workshops, therefore, were in direct opposition to the restricting structures inherent in the 'rigid temporal and spatial disciplines' (Eichberg 1998: 13) of rugby training sessions, in which the minimisation of uncertainty in the execution of set moves was an imperative: 'don't make up your own stuff!' was a frequent imprecation as noted before.

Not only is the player-centred pedagogy different from 'real training', my training is also differentiated by my willingness to adapt activities to enhance the players' engagement

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[19] Frederick Alexander developed a process of reeducation, called the Alexander technique, which aims to reduce the misuse and faulty functioning of the body by bringing awareness to habitual movement patterns (Alexander 1969). I am using the term 'end gaining' in a broader sense, referring not to the individual, but to the team's habitual movement patterns.

and understanding. It is this experimentation, and encouraging them to reflect, evaluate and choose what is valuable, that caused consternation amongst the players. As Chapter Three illustrated, the players are accustomed to rigid outcome based drills that improve their rugby playing functionality; a training that has been in operation for most of their rugby playing years. Opportunities are rare for the players to reflect on activities or to play with new or contrary approaches therefore, when given the opportunity to make choices the players are, in the majority of cases, baffled.

The performance training workshops required a willingness from the players, in ex-Wallaby coach Robbie Dean's words, to 'play what's in front of you', a formulation he repeated in the several conversations we had between 2010-2012 and, in turn, an echo of the words 'one hundred percent commitment to the now and one hundred percent openness to change' I had heard at Viewpoints workshops. In my drama classroom, students are explicitly encouraged to have a 'stake in the process' (Bogart 2005: 18), to be 'active, present and accumulating' (Mark Evans 2009: 141), to take risks, to work together. Such pedagogical practices, with which performance practitioners are generally so familiar, are largely alien concepts to the players. As I noted in Chapter Three, games were lost when set moves were disrupted.

As a means of highlighting to the players their habitual patterns, I introduced an activity that was more familiar. The players stood in a circle and, unlike the previous multi-ball throwing activity, were given only one ball and asked to throw the ball in a pattern that they could repeat. They were then given another ball with which to create another pattern. The two ball patterns were then combined. The players did not move during this exercise. The two-ball pattern was completed without a ball being dropped. Another ball was introduced and another pattern. Again there were no dropped balls.

We discussed this activity: 'We knew the pattern, so you only had to remember who you were receiving the ball from and who you were throwing it to.' 'We knew what was coming.' 'We're use to remembering patterns.' 'You knew what you were doing.' These responses illuminate once again what Bourdieu would regard as the structuring, structured structures of rugby training. As I pointed out in Chapter Three the players were

comfortable with patterns and 'knowing what to do'. What I was interested in discovering was whether having to keep a structure impacted their enjoyment of the game. 'Would you like to be able to make up your own stuff?' I asked the group. The players were quiet. When I pointed to a player he said, 'Maybe'. Another answers, 'It's hard for the team if you do your own stuff.' 'You have to have structures so you know what you are doing,' chimed in another.

Bogart (2005), John Eales (2013), former Wallaby captain, and former Wallabies coach Robbie Deans (2011) surprisingly have a common attitude to structure; they all assert that structure gives freedom. Once the full spectrum of possibilities are known as Bogart states 'you do not need to choose all of it all the time, but you are free to. ... Range increases and you begin to paint with greater variety and mastery' (2005: 19). Decisions have to be made within the rules but, once these rules are understood and acknowledged, the possibility of being creative within those rules adds to the tension and excitement of the game. 'It may seem an anomaly but attacking and entertaining rugby requires more structure, not less,' writes Eales, '[t]he structure becomes the platform from which instinct can thrive' (2013). If, however, regular training sessions are calibrated by 'rigid temporal and spatial disciplines' (Eichberg 1998: 13) that 'reduce the 'players' decision-making capabilities' (Light & Evans 2011: 108) then structure becomes a constraint.

Rugby coach Scott Wisemantel supports this point when he notes:

> I see in all sports coaches comment that [they] had a really good training week with limited errors and then they get belted. This shows that training was nice - means the chaos of the game has not been stressed enough and therefore creating an environment that is too controlled. (personal communication 3/11/14)

I am aware that time is a limiting factor for rugby coaches and that experimentation is often not an option to be fitted into the time frame of regular training sessions but players need to have an opportunity to make sense of the changing dynamics inherent in any game situation.

Within the playing group there was a perception that because there were no set patterns

in the workshop activities to which I had introduced them, there was no structure. In fact, within each exercise there were rules and spatial constraints, not unlike 'real training', but what was required of the players in the workshops— something with which they were unfamiliar—was experimentation. Training 'the intelligence of the body to be articulate to do what is necessary at any given time and to optimise the stakes of the moment' (de Quincey 2010: 2) is a well-known concept to performers and one, as explained in the previous chapter, that is an imperative of Viewpoints training. In the workshops the players were being challenged to play with structure and make decisions in response to each moment. In an attempt to push the premise of freedom in structure and further encourage the players to commit to the now but be open to change, I structured an exercise that had innumerable possibilities but one which also relied on the players being aware of each other in the space and having an acute attentiveness to the now.

As the weekly workshops progressed, I came to realise that continually placing the players in unfamiliar territory made them question the purpose of the exercises. What I had underestimated, in my enthusiasm to build a connection between rugby and performance training, was how the exercises had to be very readily perceived as directly relevant to their playing. Therefore, I adjusted this exercise to make the players feel less strange by giving it a competitive element: the players against me.

> *Each player is sitting in a chair that they have placed randomly in the space. There are thirty players and they fill the room. I place another chair in the space. It remains empty. I explain that they need to stop me from sitting in this empty chair by getting to it before I do. One of the players asks about their own vacated chair and I let them know that once we begin I can sit in any empty chair. I set up a few rules; they cannot knock me over or push me away. I will walk slowly and they have the option of moving whatever speed they wish. I begin walking and immediately players begin to rush to the empty chair. My opportunities of sitting in an empty chair are endless so I walk to the closest one and sit down. There are groans and chastising. We talk briefly about teamwork, peripheral vision, awareness of others in space, of being in the moment. We begin again. The players watch me as I walk slowly to the empty chair and this time rather than a*

rush to fill the chair one player moves quickly to take ownership. I locate where he has moved from and walk towards this chair. Again it is filled. There are hoorays and handclaps as once again I am hindered from sitting in the empty chair. Players are darting from all parts of the room. My peripheral vision is tested as I scan the room for another empty seat. I see the players watching me and looking for signals as to where I will move next. A missed communication happens and I finally sit in an empty chair. I decide to up the ante and ask three players to vacate their chairs. I am the observer this time. It is now the seated players' role to keep these other players from sitting down. There is seemingly chaos in the room as players move from seat to seat. One of the players finds an empty chair the other two still standing. The energy levels are high, bodies and eyes on high alert, players reprimanded if there is a close call. The players searching for an empty chair begin picking up pace and begin weaving through the space, seeking out opportunities to slip between players, changing direction when they sense another is blocking their way but the defence continues to repel their advances. (7 March 2013)

The exercise, drawn on to develop kinesthetic response, peripheral vision and spatial awareness, had crossed over into the realm of rugby union, where competition is a key element. The body-centred pedagogy employed in this exercise is still in play, but the players experienced the exercise in a context that they understood. The players 'got' this exercise. They had a mission, a structure and a desired outcome. Yet, within that, they had to make instant decisions, be consistently aware of the other players in the space and those they were attempting to hinder. The players commented on the need to work as a team: 'I really had to trust everyone.' 'Yeah, didn't work when people did one-offs.' Others noted that, 'You had to really concentrate ... and react fast.' 'Had to keep your eyes up.' 'Couldn't just look in one direction.' 'Good for a rainy day training.'

I have taken advantage of this activity regularly with actors to stimulate the senses, to create focus, to explore space, to build excitement but there is always an implicit understanding by the actors that the exercise is a preparation for the act of theatrical creation. Competition is not the main focus but adding a competitive element proved to be a particularly effective method of adjusting exercises to reflect this different context. When

competition was involved, the players remarked that it 'gave purpose to the activities', and 'was better than just randomly walking around'. This was borne out in the experience of introducing the concept of '*sats*', a term coined by Eugenio Barba to refer to 'the impulse towards an action which is as yet unknown, and which can go in any direction. [It] is the basic posture found in sports – tennis, badminton, fencing – when you need to be ready to react' (1995: 5).

Bogart herself adopted the term, reframing it as the 'quality of energy in the moment *before* an action' and emphasising the 'quality of preparation that determines the success of the action' (2005: 73 italics original). It is the 'readiness' that I am particularly interested in. Watching the team in matches, I observed that players not involved in the current play tended to relax their bodies, reactivating themselves when the ball or an attacker suddenly required their attention. This reactivation took time; often time enough for an attacker to make ground. To develop the players' grasp of *sats*, I conducted an experiment that, once again, revolved around competition.

5.6   The Ready Body

This session was conducted outside. I asked the group to nominate two runners; the fastest in the group, and another who was marginally slower. The two players were to race from the try line to the 20-metre line. I instructed the slower player to be 'ready to react', and the quicker player to stand in a relaxed position.

> *On my count the players run to the finish point. Much to my relief but to the surprise of the observers the slower player wins. The players ask for another race with another two players. The 'ready' player once again crosses the line first. The third time, I ask the players to observe the time it takes for the relaxed player to re-energise his body. It was a moment of revelation as they witnessed the ready player, whose energy was already harnessed, take off while the relaxed player lost precious time reengaging the energy.*
>
> *The players experiment with their own bodies relaxing and energising repeatedly,*

challenging others to a race to test the theory, investigating how their bodies moved in these different states, noticing what usually remains unnoticed. (6 December 2012)

The responses were immediately animated commenting: 'You can be at speed immediately.' 'Your reaction time is really fast.' 'We should try it at line-outs.' But before things got too carried away, a less enthusiastic player voiced a concern: 'We can't always be ready, it'd be too tiring.' The other players contemplated this remark and nodded in agreement. Perhaps, I suggested, they could relax when there was a break in play, for say, injury or goal kicking. They considered this but were not convinced this would be enough time. 'I really like the idea,' added one of the keen players 'but I just don't think we could do it for an entire match.'

When speaking to the coaches about this concept they, like the players, were convinced that always being in a ready position would tire the players unnecessarily. 'If you had proof,' I am told by the former Wallabies S&C coach, Peter Harding in a meeting on 16 September 2010, 'we would probably give it a go.' Although, the players and the coaches observed the practical application of the ready body, this was not considered 'proof'. These comments reflect, in many ways, the reaction to the whole workshop process: revelations of the possibilities, juxtaposed against the perceived impracticalities of use. As sports researcher Cliff Mallett explained in a phone conversation on 26 February 2014, 'With sport there is a perception that there is truth in numbers and not much understanding of the concept of multiple truths.'

5.7   Conclusion

So how would I evaluate the workshops? Clearly, this brief foray into the potential of Viewpoints-derived spatial and bodily awareness techniques in the context of rugby union was limited, particularly with regard to time allocation. Developing a fully nuanced perception of the modulations of bodily practice in a relatively short time frame, for players who had virtually no knowledge of theatrical practices, was always going to be problematic. My own framing of the sessions as a 'theory-testing experiment', rather than presenting the workshops as an 'expert' in the field, also impacted upon the efficacy of

the process. The players commented that had their coaches run the workshops they would have 'taken it more seriously'. There were also difficulties in separating the different personae that I was required to embody during these workshops: researcher, trainer, participant. No matter how open I was to each moment it was impossible to see everything. Even employing 'soft focus' I could only look at some of what was happening. Not every facial expression or individual player's body movement could be described. As I hastily jotted down comments or descriptions of moments, my eye was sometimes drawn to those enthusiastically participating and at others, it was the less engaged who drew my focus. Borrowing from Conquergood's description of ethnographic methodology as, 'an embodied practice: [...] an intensely sensuous way of knowing' (1991: 180) all my senses were employed to gain an overall 'feel' for the sessions. Therefore, maintaining objective distance when physically involved in an activity was somewhat problematic; being caught in the moment a hazard for this researcher.

My observations were supplemented by the players' comments during sessions and conversations with Tristan, the S&C coach, who had contact with the players five days a week. Tristan passed on comments that the players made to him such as; 'we did all this really strange stuff, but it was good' and 'I reckon some of that spatial awareness stuff should be used at trainings sometimes'.

These responses were confirmed at the end of the twenty sessions; the players were unanimous, in their evaluations, that this different style of training could be beneficial to their rugby playing. They commented that the workshop sessions developed team cohesion, peripheral vision, ball skills, non-verbal communication, ability to read cues, thinking on the spot, decision-making, players' flair and improvisational ability. Current practices, they stated, prepared them for games but it would be 'more fun' if they weren't always 'doing the same stuff' and they stated that using some of the workshop activities would add another level of interest to training sessions.

Anecdotally, there have also been indications that concepts have been retained. According to Tristan, there have since been moments at official training when players, frustrated at what was happening on the field, shouted to the others 'Remember that

spatial shit! Let's use it!*' The coaches have also told me that 'spatial awareness' has become part of the players' vernacular, something I witnessed myself: after one Saturday match, a group of players saw me in the crowd and, with reference to the game just completed, delighted in shouting out to me: 'did you see that spatial awareness?'

That being said, perhaps the most important aspect of running the workshops was illuminating the challenges inherent in crossing, or at the very least straddling, two entirely different cultural worlds. I, as much as the players, had taken-for-granted ideas about training. Although I understood that I was experimenting, I came into the training with my own habitus and, as such, my own set of expectations about how exercises should play out or what skills should be imparted. I had also made assumptions about players' knowledge and abilities; I was more surprised than the players that passing more than one ball without a pattern was a near impossible task. And, although I had watched the players at training and was aware that competition was a driving force in their playing, I was reluctant at the outset of the workshops to integrate this factor into my training. These tensions and a further examination of the limitations, challenges and potentials of cross-disciplinary training will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: Full-time

6.1 Introduction

The impetus for this research was an observation that rugby union players were seemingly missing opportunities. From my sideline, layperson's vantage point at least, it appeared they lacked an awareness of space and each other. This initial observation was slanted by my years of working as a drama teacher and theatre practitioner. Perhaps it was the kind of observation, as Bourdieu would have it, that comes from *not* being a specialist in the field of rugby and therefore seeing something 'which specialists tend to forget [...] because they have taken for granted a certain number of presuppositions' (1978: 819). Leading on from this observation was a possible solution to what I believed was an incongruity in the players' training. A solution I thought would be relatively simple to implement. How easy would it be for players to learn some of the lessons of actor movement training in order to develop their awareness of space, time and each other? In taking the observation and the action literally into the field, I became acutely aware that I, too, had made a number of presuppositions about both rugby union training and movement training for actors.

As I draw together the components of this research, two key factors have emerged. Firstly, despite the number of similarities between rugby union training and movement training for actors, the differing contexts in which rugby union and acting exist impacts the practical application and acquisition of corporeal knowledge. The second factor, pointed to in the previous chapter, is the tensions and complexities that exist when challenging the existing modes of embodiment that dominate rugby union training. This final chapter, therefore, examines more closely the dynamics and parameters of cross-disciplinary training.

6.2 Fields of practice

When I watch rugby union, while on most occasions I am viewing from a grandstand position and hence have a privileged, almost bird's eye view, I am not in the thick of the game. I do not have my head pinned to the ground or my legs taken from under me by an

opponent. I do not have to catch a ball that has been passed under pressure and does not land easily into my hands. I am not fighting my way to the try line to take the ball across the line in the dying moments of the game to win the match. I could see things that players could not but, I was not playing the game. I was a spectator 'condemned to see all practice as spectacle' (Bourdieu 1972: 1).

Clearly I had underestimated this point when beginning the research project. I had a limited understanding of the context of rugby union. I was not privy to an understanding of why the players played as they did, whether it was a personal choice or the choice of the coach. I was not cognizant of game plans such as taking the 'percentage play', or switching between the defensive or attacking phase. I was an interloper who had walked into a social field having almost no knowledge of the 'rules of [their] game', made even more alien because I was coming from a field with a very different set of 'rules'.

Coming into a field of practice as an outsider does, on the one hand, allow for questions to be asked about practices that may be overlooked by those ensconced within a field. On the opposite side of this equation, entering a new field, having minimal knowledge of the structuring structures that structure the field, has the potential to create misunderstandings. Attending the training sessions and matches of the Colts enabled me to witness a variety of dispositions within the field of rugby union—individual, coaching and institutional—giving me a modicum of understanding of the practices within the field. I say modicum because, as I noted in Chapter Three, my observations could only ever be partial. Where I stood, whom I spoke to, what matches I watched were only ever a smaller part of the whole. What the ethnographic study did give me was a language and information about the players' entrenched patterns of moving that was extremely useful in the analysis of the Viewpoints-inspired workshops.

The essential point here is that the cultural dispositions, intrinsic to a field, must be taken into consideration when attempting to cross boundaries. However in my experience, the research process, was not a fully-formed dialogue. I learnt about rugby union but the players and coaches were not particularly interested in the field from which I came. Arriving at their training sessions and explaining that I was a theatre practitioner meant

little to many of the players. Yes, they were interested in the concepts I brought with me, even if asking them to run in circles and jump simultaneously as a means of developing spatial awareness was a totally foreign idea, but as to their purpose in the theatrical world, there was little curiosity. This is certainly not a criticism of the players or the coaches, but it is important to note that in my assimilation into the field of rugby union there was a certain subjugation of the values that are privileged within my own field.

Moreover, in my desire to have the players see the value of the movement training, I made a *conscious* decision to embrace the rugby union context. As the workshops progressed the exercises became competitive, I attempted to use 'rugby language' and the players were asked more explicitly to consider how the exercises might enhance their playing. On occasions I remembered the mantra of 'not losing the integrity of the Viewpoints training', that cropped up in conversations that Samantha Chester and I had engaged in when working with the Wallabies, I wondered if, in attempting to bridge the gap, I was making too many concessions.

It is an interesting conundrum, and one on which Murray and Pitches shed light, when they suggest that:

> The issue of 'faithfulness' to the originary training regime raises challenging questions for anyone wishing to engage with structures of training as growing, organic and responsive systems rather than immutable and unchanging tablets of stone. Losing faith, breaking faith and faithlessness easily become loaded terms redolent with notions of betrayal, perfidy and disloyalty, and yet [...] – any attempt at interaction, exchange and engagement across borders (disciplinary or geographic) some sense of breaking faith is inevitable. (2014: 240)

Wrestling with the notion of 'faithfulness' to concepts within the field of theatrical performance is only an element of the equation. The players, too, were wrestling with their loyalty to their acculturated training practices. Although I was, reconfiguring movement training to fit within another context, the players were also revising their ideas about rugby union training. In acknowledging that the workshop activities developed skills that were advantageous to their playing, the players were reflecting on their own practice and, if only briefly, considering how the current rugby union training regimes could be enhanced.

6.3 Modalities of the body

Watching the players in training and then in the workshops, it became evident that within every body there is a range of bodily knowledge. Drew Leder explains the multifariousness of the one-body experience by describing the body as 'modulated into various keys' (1990: 172). Zarrilli expands this notion when he states that virtuosic performers have an ability to 'oscillate' (2004: 664) between modes. I would argue that training, whether for rugby union or for acting, focuses attention on particular modulations and disregards others. A dichotomy in training therefore exists as bodily knowledge is simultaneously extended and restricted. This is not to say that a 'gradual awakening and attunement' (Zarrilli 2004: 664) of other modalities cannot be achieved but, before this can happen, there must be a recognition that different modes exist.

The players' bodies, as I have illustrated in Chapter Three, are trained to be strong, fast and resilient. These bodies are quantifiable objects that are measured and regulated. Discussions about skin folds, weight, the number of push ups, the speed over 100 metres, the kilograms that can be lifted are a prominent feature of the players' sideline banter, highlighting how the players quantify their own bodies. Training reinforces this mode of embodiment because the stronger, faster and more resilient players are valued. Although players who can 'read the play', 'sense the space' and 'have great vision' are also highly regarded, these qualities are largely viewed as the product of 'natural talent' and, therefore, something which cannot be taught.

Murray and Keefe challenge this position, arguing that:

> [t]hese qualities are never reducible to technical skills, but neither are they 'God-given' or genetically determined marks of genius, lying outside human agency and invention. They are dispositions and inflections which can be acquired partly through structured exercise, but more importantly through a slow and repeated immersion in the process of play, reflection, experiment and human interaction. (2007:137)

The analysis presented in this thesis on the Viewpoints-inspired workshops supports this view by demonstrating how the physical attentiveness and sensitivity of the players was gradually awakened, if only at a preliminary level, when this mode of bodily knowledge

was explicitly brought into focus. The potential, therefore, of other forms of training to extend the range of the rugby players' playing repertoire seems considerable.

The implications here for rugby union are that if players were immersed in multi-modal training from an early age, players could develop the required technical skills of a rugby player alongside those of intuition and instinct. If players discover the variety of repertoires their bodies are capable of at a young age then there is also the potential for players to manipulate modes for a variety of situations on the rugby union field. A team of technically adept and highly kinesthetically aware players surely is a coach's dream.

6.4   The space between

While the players grasped, even if only partially, the potential of techniques borrowed from and adapted from performance training to enhance their mastery of the game, I understand that, for many rugby union coaches, reframing perceptions of embodiment would require a 'leap of faith'—a leap that several other clubs, whom I approached in connection with this research, were not prepared to take. The Sydney University Rugby Football Club coaches were happy for me to experiment with this 'sense stuff' but building the processes into the regular trainings was a step that they were, at this stage, not prepared to take. Although acknowledging that the training brought benefits to the Wallabies, Deans and his team did not continue to pursue this style of training. All the coaches that I spoke to throughout the research, commented that the time frame within which they worked made it difficult to introduce anything new: 'We have a hard enough time developing basic skills during training sessions,' one coach explained.[20]

Time, I would suggest, is not the only constraining factor. As my discussion in the previous chapter highlighted, the teaching pedagogy I employed was, in many ways, oppositional to the style of coaching I witnessed at training sessions. In this respect, therefore, implementing training exercises from another discipline would also require coaches learning alternative teaching practices. As noted in Chapter Two, current rugby union coaching pedagogies are well established and believed to serve the needs of the

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[20] That being said, there is interest. I was recently (4/03/15) invited by Michael Cheika, Head coach of the Waratahs, the 2014 Super Rugby Champions, to run 3 x 1 hour workshops with his playing squad.

game. I acknowledge that a spur to invest in additional training techniques would require much more than a leap of faith; rather, it would require a reassessment by the stakeholders within the field of taken for granted assumptions about the game. It would require admitting, perhaps, that the messiness inevitable in a match cannot be controlled by choreographed moves and *presumptions* about the opposition. Further, it would require a readjustment to the concept that instinct and intuition, the mark of 'natural talent' or the 'X-factor', can be developed.

Nevertheless, in the very act of conducting the ethnographic study and workshops with the Sydney University Rugby Club, it is clear that fields are not impermeable. In the words of Bourdieu:

> Habitus is [...] an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. *It is durable but not eternal!* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 133 emphasis added)

I would suggest that the window of connection, when the coaches and players contemplated another style of training, is the space, similar to the gap on the rugby union field, where shifts and changes can occur. There are clearly challenges to implementing new techniques but, just as a player with flair and creativity sees the possibilities that are offered by a small gap, I believe the small space that has been opened by this research offers rugby union coaches and players a daring opportunity to enhance the way they train and play.

EPILOGUE: Off-Field Play

The training today is in the Rex Cramphorn studio. The players walk in and look around. 'Is this a theatre?' asks one. Another player goes to the centre of the space. 'To be or not to be?' he pronounces in a very clear voice. He remarks that the space has good acoustics. We all laugh. Almost simultaneously another player pulls a rugby ball out of the bag I have resting on the wall and begins throwing it to one of the other players. A ball is thrown high and I hold my breath momentarily as it skates past the lights hanging from the lighting rig. I ask them to be careful and they comply. We begin the session, the group of rugby union players and I focusing on peripheral vision. One of the players says 'I hate it when people don't use peripheral vision. When they don't, they always get drawn to what is in front of them rather than seeing opportunities'. In this moment, negotiating balls and lights, I recognise both the dangers and possibilities of traversing the space between actor training and training to play rugby union. (23 November 2012)

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