

Don't Be Mistaken—This Does Concern You!

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Abstract

In this article, the author attempts to represent the *mise abyme effect*, when writing a “story within a story.” Instead of showing the two stories of sexual harassment in sport that the author wrote to trigger her students’ reactions to this issue, this article focuses on the experience of one of the students reacting to the two stories and discovering her own personal relationship to sexual harassment in sport. Instead of choosing a linear description charting the sexual harassment or abuse of this student, the author has chosen to represent her story of being an unconscious witness to the abuse a former teammate suffered in the past as a gymnast. The final purpose is to reflect on one’s “possible subtle” involvement in perpetrating sexual harassment in sport.

Keywords

multiple subject, writing as a way of inquiring, sexual harassment, sport

Dealing With My Fears

The driving motive for writing two stories with Carla and Hortensia as main characters was the need to deal with sexual harassment in their sport contexts while not attributing blame and finding wrongdoers. It was more about working from the scratch and being an optimist about the future. It is mainly about preventing it from happening in the future. Because of that I realized that while it is important to have data and to know the experiences of the insider, it is also crucial to establish bridges between the research and the ones who are going to be in charge in sports settings as coaches, educators, or administrators.

However, how could I openly discuss in a class where the vast majority are male sports students aged between 19 and 21 the existence and presence of sexual harassment in their sports? How could I do it and break through their resistance to being identified as a perpetrator just for being a male sport coach? In the process of exploring new ways of problematizing sexual harassment in sport in a class setting I wrote the two stories for them to engage with and to feel part of the plot. My intention was to give them a voice without making them feel they were the ones to blame. My ultimate goal was to provide a space where feeling part of the problem could be experienced without anxiety.

The driving idea supporting this experiential exercise was moving away from a simple discourse, “It’s wrong, this shouldn’t happen, put policies in place, catch the offenders and move on,” toward tackling the idea head on, “We are all more involved in this than we initially thought.” Being a

sports person—someone who will probably end up being in charge of something in the sport world as a job, as a hobby, as a way of living and feeling—and being able to provide and enjoy all the good and positive experiences from sport do not save anyone from dealing with a whole set of issues that makes her or him uncomfortable and, in some ways, ashamed of the thing she or he most loves: sport.

Setting the Scene

Ona is at the College of Education walking up the stairs.

In the Scene

What can she possibly want this time? I don’t have much time. Does she realize that it’s the end of the semester? I hate those lecturers who think their subject is the only one, the be-all and end-all. I hate this . . . but I have to stay if I want the final A in my assignment. Looking at my watch . . . Oh shit! If I’m late Tony is going to kill me . . . I hope this whole thing finishes in 20 minutes. What does she want from us now?

I enter the classroom and eagerly I look at my watch again.

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Shit!!! And the class is empty . . . I definitely have to stay. But I need to go and work with Tony in 20 minutes. We need to hand in the final essay on physiology . . . Stupid physiology! I hate it. How am I going to make it?

I move toward the front of the class, I lift the chair's arm, and I sit. Suddenly Miquel enters the room, grabs a chair, and sits next to me. I have never been so close to him. I feel palpitations speeding up in my neck and my face blushing. I pray he doesn't notice it. What would he think of me? I realize I can only make a very badly articulated and timid "Hey." He replies nodding his head.

"Grrrr." A noise from the cavern of my stomach makes a presence.

"Me too!" Miquel exclaims, with his wide green olive eyes.

Oh my God! They are so captivating. I could be lost in them forever.

He looks at me with impatience; I guess my gaze is making him uncomfortable. Directing my sight to the outside door of the classroom I reply, "I hope it isn't very long. I need to eat something and then I have to meet Tony to finish the physiology course. Have you already finished it?"

"Are you joking? This is for Friday? And today is Wednesday, isn't it? We have plenty of time," Miquel chuckles and leans back in his chair.

"Yeah . . . I suppose so . . ." I'm not thinking, just admiring him.

He grabs a pen out of his bag. "Do you think we'll need paper too?"

I shrug my shoulders. "I guess not. Do you know what this is all about?"

I see Carlos coming into the class. He is so stupid. He thinks that having a dick is enough to be someone in class, in life. I hate him.

Carlos looks at me with disdain and taps Miquel's left shoulder as he sits down behind him. "Hey Micky, How are you doing?" To me it sounds like: "Why are you wasting your precious time with this nobody?"

Easing the situation and looking at me with care, Miquel comments, "I thought you wouldn't come."

"Yeah me too, but I need some extra points for my final grade or I won't pass this stupid sociology. Really, man, I don't know why Montse makes so much fuss about something that gets us nowhere. Who cares about the gypsies, the Latinos, the Muslim women, or even the fags doing sports?" Carlos says, leaning back in his chair and putting his knee on top of the corner of the table arm.

I shake my head at Carlos, roll my eyes at Miquel, and turn my back to both of them. I can't bear him. Who does he think he is?

Montse finally crosses the door. Shaking my legs impulsively, I look again at the time. Oh shit, I need to be with Tony in 15 minutes. He's going to kill me.

"Does everyone have a pen? You don't need paper to answer the questions, just a pen." Montse gives the papers

out and explains, "What you have in your hands is a story about young athletes. For the girls, the main character is Carla, a 16-year-old volleyball player, who has recently been picked to start training with the Spanish Junior team. For the guys it's an excerpt of Hortensia's diary. She's a 14-year-old swimmer who falls in love with her coach, who is 21. At the end of each story are several questions to answer around the characters and their interactions. I'm asking you to become part of the story by imagining you are someone related to the main characters in each story. For the girls as you'll find at the end of the story I ask you to become Carla's best friend. For the guys you're also a coach of the club where Hortensia is, but you're not her coach; you are actually a friend of Hortensia's coach." She looks at us; she realizes we are not following her. "Ok, you'll understand better once you read the whole piece. Please read the story carefully and try to engage with the situation it's representing. I'm aware it is lunchtime and the end of the semester, so I really appreciate the effort you are all making by being here. Thank you very much for participating."

With Carla's story in my hand and a hopeless expression, I turn to Miquel and ask him, "Do you think we will be out of here in 15 minutes? Look how long it is. I have to meet Tony and I'm dying; I didn't have breakfast today."

"Ona please can you turn and start reading? We don't have all day to do this."

I look at her, upset. Exactly. I have to be out of here in 15 minutes. My stomach makes funny noises again: "Grrrr."

I can feel Miquel struggling with himself while he's reading the story. At some point he exclaims out loud, "I can't believe it, a coach of 21 is having an affair with Hortensia, who is only 14? And the bastard is cheating on his girlfriend?" When Montse passes him I hear Miquel mumbling in a worried tone, "Montse, this Hortensia story is all invented, right?" Montse nods without uttering a word, but seeing Miquel's anxious expression, she moves quickly toward the other end of the class where the window is, and she opens it.

Feeling a nice breeze invading the class, I feel more comfortable as I keep reading Carla's story. I need to be quick. I skim as much as I can and then I turn the last sheet to read the questions:

Now you are Carla's best friend in her hometown, and she is telling you all about the last sexually suggestive encounters with her coach on the volleyball court. What would you advise her to do?

Forgetting I'm in the class, I exclaim, "I didn't notice it was about sexually suggestive encounters. What does that mean?"

"Shush," says Montse.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to." Ashamed, I retort. I'm lost. Luckily Miquel looks lost too.

What does Montse wants us to say? That this guy is a jerk? Is he clearly a jerk? Could it just be Carla's imagination? Oh well! I guess Tony will have to wait a bit longer. I touch my stomach with care: You too will have to wait.

I hear Miquel twirling with his pen around his fingers faster and faster. I turn toward him, and I see that he is looking behind at Carlos, who gesturing to Hortensia's story while suggestively licking his lower lip. I shake my head in disbelief at what I think Carlos is imagining. The bastard! He doesn't really respect anything in this world. How can he be a friend of Miquel? I know Carlos is from his hometown, and they play football together, but this is too much. . . .

When Montse is on the other side of the classroom, Miquel whispers to me, "This year in the club we have started a new under-19 female team, and Carlos has volunteered to train them. I'm really worried because they trust him, and they are very grateful that he has bothered to train them when they were so short of coaches. He is becoming a kind of a hero for them, you can imagine." I nod closing my eyes and picturing the image of Carlos with one of the players. "Horrible," I utter.

"Shush," We hear from the back of the classroom.

We both turn around and this time we see Carlos, in his usual sarcastic playful and always sexual manner, looking at us while touching his nipples and playing with his tongue.

"Y. .u. .c. .k," I look at Carlos with disgust. Miquel looks upset and really worried.

I'm sure Carlos thinks this is all a joke. I hate this guy. He must think he can have any girl he wants from his new team. He's in power and he's the coach; more than one player will look for his favors. Yucky! Who would like to go out with a guy like him? I put my head down and, isolating myself from these tormented thoughts, I read slowly and try to be Carla:

Slowly but steadily Carla is undergoing a process of isolation. Every day she feels more and more isolated from the team. Becoming the favorite of the coach has made her unwelcome. . . . Silence everywhere she goes in the club, in the changing room, in the away games; silence is the only thing that surrounds her now, silence that unfortunately veils too much to be openly told.

Being the protégé means unfair competition with the rest of the players to make the national team, and Carla looks arrogant with her advantageous position. She has stopped talking to the others. The others have stopped talking in front of her. She feels awkwardly guilty and ashamed of something she has never wanted or started. She is starting to feel horrified about the possible consequences.

She still goes to bed asking, "Where did I show him I was so desperate to get into the team, where did I show him I wanted to be touched and flattered by him, where, when, how. . . . It's true being on this team means everything to

me. But why me, why did it have to be me? There are 12 of us in the team; there are others prettier and hotter than me. Why did he pick me?"

Protégé, the favorite of the coach. . . . I remember Irene being the protégé of Rafa. . . .

Being the protégé means unfair competition with the rest of the players to make the national team, and Carla looks arrogant with her advantageous position. She has stopped talking to the others. The others have stopped talking in front of her. She feels awkwardly guilty and ashamed of something she has never wanted or started. She is starting to feel horrified about the possible consequences.

After more than 8 years I suddenly see it again, that horrified look on Irene's face. That look that my mind has always repressed because I couldn't bear the possibility of Irene being frightened by Rafa. That image vividly comes back to me.

Irene is already in the car with that intense sad look: a look that represents a mixture of horror and impotence when a painful process leads one to completely ignore her own body in order to endure . . . the bodily inevitability?

The breeze stops and I can feel the air solidifying around me. When did I see that look for the first and last time? What happened just before that look? I hold my head with my right arm, and staring at the tree through the window I realize the tree is slowly fading away and I see myself alone in the changing room getting ready for another training session.

* * *

"Have you seen Irene?" Judit comes in an uproar, banging the door.

"No, I just got here. I'm still wrapping my ankle from Saturday. What a championship! And you were second, not bad at all. I'm very proud of you."

Judit looks puzzled at me "Thank you . . . but . . . Come outside, you have to see this. Irene is literally flying between the asymmetric bars and if she falls down she'll break her neck. I think Rafa is going too far. So scary!"

I don't rush and I talk even slower than before, to show Judit that I don't give a damn about Irene's troubles. I assert, "Well, if she wants to be the best in nationals she has to do it and Rafa is all there for her. All his time and energy is hers." I breathe in and out slowly and I continue, "Have you realized that he didn't comment after my win last weekend? Not a single word or a single look of approval or excitement." I pause and look intensely at the floor. I raise my eyes and I meet Judit's while I remark, "I'm telling you, Irene is very lucky. He'll make something big out of her. Have you noticed how close they talk to each other lately?"

“Nope . . . What do you mean? I always see Irene training and training, repeating the same movements thousands of times and most of the time she looks in real pain and with an expression of suffering in her face. I guess because Rafa is pushing her to the limit.” Judit raises her tone. “But the twirls and whirls she is doing today . . . Auchhh! I’m telling you if she falls Rafa is going to be in trouble with her parents.”

Feeling my blood running faster through my veins, I get up and go toward the mirror to get my pigtail done. When I pass close to Judit I tap her shoulder: “I see you are not a real gymnast. This is what it is all about: risking and pushing your body to the limits to show the judges you are the best.” I stop talking for a second: I need concentration to tie my hair into a very tight pigtail and to turn the elastic band one more time. “Ahhh . . . That’s it!” I turn toward Judit and more energetically I continue, “And you know what?”

Judit shrugs her shoulders “What?”

“Rafa is the best coach and he’s going to make her a real champion.” I need to control my rage, so I lower my voice and I ask, “Have you noticed that since she has started this intensive training for the nationals she does not even say hi to us?” Sarcasically I add, “I guess she does not have time. She is soooooo busy training all day long. I really can’t bear her. She’s so . . . cocky . . . just because Rafa thinks she can get to nationals, doesn’t mean she is better than us in all aspects. Just because she has Rafa’s attention . . .” I hold my tears back.

Judit tries to ease the tension and she chuckles. “I guess you are right. I remember Irene before though, when Rafa wasn’t here, she used to speak and laugh with all of us. I remember you two used to be together all the time. For a while I was even very jealous of you two, you looked so inseparable, but since Rafa came a couple of years ago, something changed between you and among all of us. Not sure what it is, but can you not feel it? We are more competitive, we don’t laugh as much, and all this is becoming too damn serious.”

“Yeah, we are not little girls anymore, and Rafa is taking us to the highest point of gymnastics and this requires sacrifice and hard work,” I reply firmly.

“Not sure I agree with that. I do gymnastics because my friends are here and I love the feeling of the mat under my feet and my body freely moving in the air, but if I had to be in pain all the time like Irene . . .” Judit lowers her head and mutters mainly to herself, “Is it worth it?”

“You see Irene knows she is going to be a real champion, thanks to Rafa, and she is taking advantage of it. I don’t know how she is ever going to pay Rafa back for all that he’s doing for her.” I wave both of my arms a couple of times between me and Judit and I conclude, “Look at us, sometimes Rafa doesn’t even notice we are also on the mat. What a waste.”

With an assertive tone that I have seen very few times in Judit she goes, “I’m not sure all this is worth it. I’ll never do

what Irene is doing for gymnastics or for seeking Rafa’s attention and approval. I’m telling you this is crazy.”

Putting my arms around her shoulders I say jokingly, “Don’t be so melodramatic. What world are you living in? This is real elite-level gymnastics, haven’t you heard? ‘No pain no gain’; I always add, ‘No risk, no win.’ That’s all! Take it or leave it.”

Holding my waist and rolling her eyes, she pushes me through the door and she retorts, “Whatever! Come on, let’s go outside, I want you to see it with your own eyes. You are going to freak out.”

And I freaked out. When we step into the gym training room we see everybody confused and petrified at the same time. Rafa was yelling at Irene like a wounded animal. Irene was on the floor weeping and holding her left wrist. She looked so vulnerable, so fragile under Rafa’s dominion. For the first time in a long time I truly felt sorry and scared for her. I wondered what she had done for Rafa to be so mad at her.

“Get up, pick your things up and get into the car at once.”

Irene did not move a muscle and kept weeping.

Holding her pigtail, Rafa lifted her up and repeated every single syllable “Pick up your bag and get into the car!”

Nobody moved. All the girls were together around me, looking at me with a question mark on their faces. I opened my eyes wide, looking as astonished as they were. No body moved.

“Ona, would you please be so kind as to be in charge of the training today?” Rafa asked.

I nodded impulsively and Rafa left the room after Irene. We remained in silence for a couple of minutes, looking at each other, looking for answers. Then, I instinctively left the room and all the girls followed me. When we got to the outside door, I saw Irene already in the car. I looked at her deeply and I saw *that intense sad look: a look that represents a mixture of horror and impotence when a painful process leads one to completely ignore her own body in order to endure . . . the bodily inevitability?*

* * *

Montse’s Thoughts

[Seeing Ona welling up and so far away makes me uneasy I get closer to her. She does not notice my presence. She’s definitely in another place, but where, though? Professor Brackenridge already advised me to be careful with this kind of research. She said to be cautious: One needs psychological support just in case it opens up past traumatic experiences. What am I going to do if Ona has had a similar experience to Carla in the story? Or if she has had some traumatic unwanted sexual attention in her past

even out of sport? Is she going to tell me? How am I going to handle it? Do I want her to share it with me? What will I do with this information? I feel I'm not ready for this yet. What shall I do?

"Phew!" I gesture looking at what she has written so far. Nothing looks very deep. But maybe the problem is that she's not able to express it in the paper, in 5 minutes. Maybe she needs more time and a more trusted atmosphere to really engage and express the deepness of the issue I'm making them engage with. I need to be careful! I know very little about the outcomes of sexual harassment and abuse experiences in athletes. How stupid I am, while I was writing the stories about Carla and Hortensia my intention was for them to get deeply engaged with the situation and provoke in them a complex and felt reaction to the characters. Now I'm shitting myself; what if Ona is opening up something that has been buried in her mind for years and she didn't want to revisit it? Who am I to trigger her past?

For anyone it's always very painful to recall unwanted sexual experiences. While I was writing Carla's and Hortensia's stories I had to put myself in their shoes and for that I had to dig deep down in my memories to bring to the surface that disgusting incident in Norway, which does not make me feel very proud of myself as a friend.

We were in a very small town in central Norway. Anna and I were the happiest friends in the world. We had just finished our kinesiology degree, and we went travelling all over Europe that summer. We felt the world was our oyster. We didn't have much money so we were sleeping wherever we could: trains, parks, stations, and abandoned places on the outskirts of the cities, wherever was fine to pass one night. How naive we were! Finally we reached the extreme north of Europe: Norway. There we were staying in Martin's house, a guy I'd met few years earlier while picking strawberries in a farm nearby. I couldn't deny the attraction Anna and him had as soon as they met. It was Saturday night and the three of us went out to another town to a rock concert and as usual we drank like fish. We came back to the house, and I remember seeing lots of people in the house. I was completely out of my mind; that strong home-brewed alcohol they produce had killed all my possible neuronal connections. Slowly, between dreams and reality, I woke up in my bed, and I was naked with a guy on top of me licking my nipples. At the beginning I couldn't react, I was too tired and drunk to understand what was going on. "Get off of

me." I pushed him with my arm to one side, and I turned over on the other side bending myself to protect my body and falling asleep. Then, I woke up very uncomfortably with the guy on top of me again. I pushed him off me again and again. Eventually, feeling dizzy and disconcerted, I got out of the bed and looked for my pj's. Then I recalled that I had already put them on earlier. I went up the stairs to the living room and I wondered where Martin and Anna were. Looking for them, I bumped into Martin's room and I saw Anna sleeping alone in a very big and comfy bed. I lifted the sheets and I got into the bed with her, she didn't move an inch.

I'm not sure how long after, I woke up and again I felt a hand touching my breast and my body in a very impatient manner. The same guy again. I desperately wanted to get rid of him and keep sleeping. "Leave me alone," I said while I took his hands off me. I had to take his hands off my body several times until I couldn't bear it any longer and I got up. I walked over Anna. She didn't move. Then, I did the only thing I could think to protect MY body: I locked myself in the bathroom. I put a couple of towels in the bath and I lay down to sleep. When the first spell of sunlight came into the bathroom through the window, a strenuous banging noise at the door made me jump. I didn't understand what was going on. What does he want now? Suddenly I stopped moaning and feeling sorry for myself and Anna came to my mind. Where was she?

When the sun was completely out, Anna calling my name woke me up. My whole body was aching, and I felt my head was heavy, like I was wearing an iron helmet trying to shrink my skull. Auchh! So bloody painful! She didn't look upset. She looked blankly I guess as I did. She asked in a broken voice, "coffee?"

We never mentioned what happened that night. I never dared to ask; she never dared to show me her feelings about it. Nevertheless, that night I felt for the first time I deceived my best friend and something deep inside me broke forever.]

"Ona, have you finished?" Montse mutters, very close to my face.

I shake my head. She looks at me, as if she wants something else from me. Not sure what. She really looks worried and sad. Maybe she has been through a similar experience to Carla and she wants to communicate this, but how? Maybe this is why she's so persistent about the values of feminism in her classes . . . ? I don't know, I don't get it, something like this has never happened to me, and it's difficult to imagine it just like that in 5 minutes.

“You don’t have to do it if you don’t feel like it.” She tells me in a very caring and soft tone.

“Yeah, yeah. I’ll finish it, no problem.” You could have said so earlier, then, I could be with Tony right now.

Forcing myself to finish it, I read the question again:

Now imagine you are Carla’s best friend from kindergarten and you have received a short and sharp phone call from her. She needs to talk to you about what is going on with her coach. She cannot keep it secret any longer. The situation is consuming her. She does not know what to do and you are her last hope. What would you do? What would you advise her to do?

I breathe and I put my pen down:

First of all, make sure what is happening is real. I mean that it’s not your imagination, or your fault; maybe you have sent out wrong signals to the coach if you are so desperate to get into the team, maybe you did not control them, and you showed the coach you were willing to do anything to make the team. Then, make sure he does not act like this with other players; maybe it’s just his character. And you shouldn’t worry. If you still feel that something not quite right is going on, try to talk to him in a friendly manner, as naturally as possible. Tell him you feel uncomfortable staying alone with him that extra time every single day after training; tell him you want to be like the rest of the players on the team. If this doesn’t work, I’ll help you to tell your parents; I’m sure they will help and support you. . . . If you are so distressed, think that you always have the option to leave the team; nobody is forcing you to be on the team. I know it is your dream, but sometimes you have to ask yourself: Is it worth it?

Carlos has finished his answers and gets up to go to the front of the class when he mutters, looking down at Miquel and touching his shoulder, “Wohooo! I see you are getting horny, buddy! Welcome to my club.” “What a jerk!” Miquel mumbles without vocalizing, closing his eyes and tensing his right fist.

I can feel how ashamed Miquel is of his gender. Carlos is so extremely vulgar. Why does he have to show how masculine he is in this machosexual manner? I hate him! I shrug my shoulders, and I roll my eyes as a sign of complicity with Miquel. He replies back with a hopeless expression, and he mutters, “What can I do? I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” I say surprised.

While Montse is talking to Carlos in the front of the class, Miquel shows me his writing and I read his answers:

I guess I would talk to Hortensia and try to open her innocent eyes. “Look Hortensia, this guy is taking advantage of you” . . . Or should I talk directly to the guy and tell him that if he doesn’t stop this with Hortensia I’d report him to the club’s head coach and even inform Hortensia’s parents? Whose fault is it? Who am I to intrude in other’s people love affairs? And also everybody knows what a teenager is capable of doing nowadays; just look at the way some of them dress. In some cases, I think they are begging for it . . .

However, I’ll definitely get the guy alone and tell him “Stop messing around with a 14-year-old girl or otherwise I’ll tell the head coach. Then Miquel breathes deeply and he adds in capital letters while I’m observing him. “FOR GOD SAKE! ARE YOU NOT FUCKING ASHAMED OF DOING THIS TO A LITTLE GIRL???”

I lift my right thumb up, and I agree with his words by moving my head slightly up and down.

“Thank you,” Miquel says, looking relieved. “I’ll see you around.” He grabs the papers and leaves the classroom. I sigh, unable to stop looking at his back.

Aftermath

The working session with Tony is appalling. I can’t concentrate because Carla’s story is still resounding in my mind and a lot of “ifs” are still troubling me. . . .

Carla didn’t know what to do; she felt very lonely. She couldn’t trust anybody on the team, since the coach had made her the protégé. She was surrounded by silence. Silence when she arrived at the volleyball court, silence in the changing room, and silence on the away trips. . . . A lot of times having to train alone with the coach to catch up; to become a solid player of the national volleyball team.

I can see there are some parallels between Carla and Irene.

For Rafa, the excuse was that Irene was so superior to all of us that she needed to train to the point of exhaustion in order to have a chance of being part of the national team. How many times were we seated on the gym mat waiting for Rafa to tell us what to do? Sometimes it seemed that Rafa didn’t even notice that 10 more gymnasts were there. Irene was so perfect . . . her movements, her rhythms, her little kind and innocent face. . . . Then she started to believe she was superior to all of us . . . but Irene wanted all of this,

didn't she? She loved feeling superior and being Rafa's protégé, didn't she?

"Come on, Ona, pay attention, what do you think about moving this example to the beginning?"

I shrug my shoulder and I don't say a word. What is he talking about? I look indifferently at Tony.

"What is going on, you were late and now you're not helping? Do you want to meet tomorrow? We still have time."

I open my eyes wide and retort, "Really? You think so? That would be fantastic! Let's meet tomorrow. Today . . . I don't know . . . I can't concentrate . . . don't know what it is. Do you mind?"

"You're a nightmare, do you know that? You could have said so earlier. Then, I wouldn't have had to wait for you. I'm gonna kill you. Like you, I have lots of things to do as well."

"I'm sorry, I didn't know that today I had to do that weird exercise about unwanted sexual attention stories and now I can't concentrate. I'm sorry." Relieved, I breathe. "Tomorrow I'll be more than a hundred percent ready for this essay. I promise!"

I can't wait to get home and be in front of the computer alone to have time to think. What am I looking for . . . ?

While I'm switching it on, the horrified expression on Irene's face, that first and last day I saw it, is appearing again. I log onto Google and almost without breathing or blinking I write *Irene Fàbregues gymnast* and I press "search." At first sight nothing comes up, after scrolling down a while I find Irene in a list of our club; all of my friends from the club are there too: Judit, Marta, Patri, Mònica. . . . What a year! We all became very close friends. At the bottom of the page it says, coach: Rafa Benítez.

Poor Rafa: He had to deal with all of us, and especially with Irene, who became very demanding. I never understood why he had to pay her so much attention. Sometimes it was too much. Oh well I guess we were all jealous of Irene, and we never understood the meaning of her real potential.

Without thinking much, I type on the screen: "Rafa Benitez Gymnastic coach." What was the name of the club he went after he left us? Oaxaca-Mexico I write next.

The first hit is Rafael Benitez' biography and his sport achievements as a gymnast. He was in Montreal 1976. How handsome he was! Oh, I really had a crush on him.

After scrolling down, three more entries:

OUTRAGE IN SMALL MEXICAN TOWN AS SEXUAL ABUSE SCANDAL HITS OAXACA GYMNASTIC CLUB

23 June 2003

Rafael Benitez has suddenly been fired from Oaxaca Gymnastic club. According to some anonymous sources, it seems he's been involved in some sexual scandals with gymnasts. Nobody knows where he is now. Presumably he's back in Spain.

Oh My GOD!!! 23rd of June 2003? I click several times on the site to read avidly the rest of the information from a local newspaper. I check a few more entries but nothing new after June 2003 comes up.

I get up and search the bottom drawer of my desk. . . . after almost emptying it I finally find something interesting. I hold it and I smile; I recognize my old diary. I flip through until I read:

Tuesday, 12 of January 2003.

Today it's a sad day for all of us in the club after a virus attacked Rafa and he has been unable to train us for a month. He has definitely abandoned us; he has left to go to Oaxaca in Mexico without saying goodbye.

I wonder if his leaving has something to do with Irene going to train with another coach a month ago. Maybe he feels so betrayed and ashamed that someone has taken Irene from him that he never wants to train or see us again.

Wherever you are I love you Rafa, you are the best coach I've ever had.

[A kiss in intense red lipstick fills up the reminder of the page.]

"Oh my God!!" Louder "Oh myyyy f. . . cking God!"

Screaming with rage in my gut, I can't avoid crying: "How could I have been so blind?" "What did Rafa do, the bastard?" "Why didn't we see anything?" "Why didn't I see anything?"

Getting up from the chair and acting like a suffocated lion in a cage; I start opening all the drawers impulsively and emptying them on the floor. I'm almost not able to walk in my room when I see the blue square box with pink lightning on the top. I push away the surrounding objects. I sit and then lie down against my cupboard. I caress the box with extra care. All the memories from these years with Irene and the rest slowly are coming back to my mind. I open the box and I start meticulously observing all the photos, one by one.

In a vain attempt to find answers, I look for Rafa and Irene in all the photos. I scrutinize their positions, their looks, their outfits, and their body language. In most of them they are side by side or Irene is in his lap. Eagerly I search for Rafa's hands, not in the photo, but in my memory of the times the photos were taken. I carefully follow both of their silhouettes with my imagination and now the

terrified expression of Irene that day in the car starts making sense. I can't stop crying, "Why, why, why did I see nothing?" "Why did none of us notice anything?"

I try to calm down and after a few minutes I'm able to control my breathing and my tears. I pick up a photo and I get up, feeling I could fall into a hole any second. I need to be strong. I need to reach the lamp on the desk. I can't stop looking at Irene in this photo. It's a photo from the first year of being all-together in the club: We were 6 to 7 years old; at that point Cristina was the coach. We all looked extremely happy and cheerful. My right arm is around Irene's neck, and I'm pressing Irene's head to my breast. Irene is laughing with her mouth wide open, the lack of the two front teeth makes her face remarkably cute and candid.

My thumb is caressing her face in the photo while tears roll down my cheeks. For the first time in a very long time I unfold from my memory that tender and moving expression in Irene's innocent and beautiful face. For the first time in a very long time I don't feel enraged with her and feel sorry for what we missed while being confronted.

Pressing the photo against my chest and looking up, I scream: "What would I have done if I'd known what was really going on between Irene and Rafa?" "What can one do in this kind of situation?" "Why, why, why can a coach ever do something like that to a young girl?" Resigned that it's too late now to help Irene, I wonder what can I do about it now. Should I talk to Montse about it in the next sociology class? What kind of friend will it make me in front of Montse? What would Miquel think of me if he knew . . . ? How am I going to live the rest of my life with this in my chest?

Deleted Scenes

Methodological Energies

Approaching the self as multilayered, nonunitary, and not "a monolithic One" (Braidotti, 1991, p. 13) and experimenting with writing as a way of inquiry (Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) as a creative act of discovery (Denzin, 1994) and as a place to position the self (Pelias, 2011) represents "a source of methodological energy" (Childers, 2011, p. 345).

My methodological instruments are gathered out of the curiosity of wanting to know how students will react to two short stories of sexual harassment in sport settings. After reading various different sexual harassment cases in sport and getting distressed, depressed, enraged, silenced, stomach pain, soul divided, an idea started to prowl in my thoughts. How do I make sense of all of this? How do I give it visibility? How can my grief and the grief of so many be useful? For that purpose, I needed to evoke my own past experiences in sexual harassment, and the Norway incident came vividly to my mind.

As a consequence, the story has become the instrument, the process of "writing into"; I underwent in the search for creating more knowledge on the plural and multiple self—student. At the same time the self who is writing is also a plural and multiple self—teacher. Lastly, as it is underlined in poststructuralist theorist texts and in new modes of representation in qualitative inquiry stances, this story is partial, multivocal, and unfinished. The journey has just started; therefore, it is widely open to readers' interpretations and reflections to make it richer: more evocative, engaging, and embodied as possible.

Background Settings

Nowadays sexual harassment and abuse in sport is an undeniable reality. Unfortunately whenever and wherever research on this topic is conducted, it always finds that some unpleasant behaviors or experiences have taken place in Europe, for example, in Norway, Belgium, United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic (Auwelee et al., 2008; Brackenridge et al., 1997; Fasting et al., 2010, 2004), and also in other places, for example, in Australia (Leahy et al., 2002, 2004), Canada (Kirby et al., 2000), and in the United States (Wolkein-Caplan, 2001).

Even sport, an activity known for its high-achieving morals and humanist values and well-disciplined norms, cannot avoid dirtying its image by it. This confirms what for a long time sports feminists have been telling us that sport is one of the last male bastions governed by the ideology of masculinity (Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Messner & Birrell, 1994). As such sport is still very much engrained with the sexism and patriarchy that are at the forefront of its representations and consequences. Most sports feminist researchers are devoted to revealing the inequalities and the oppressive power relationships between women and men in the sports arena. Sports feminist research gives us an important account of why sexual harassment and abuse cannot be analyzed as individual accidents or marginal behaviors (Brackenridge, 2002).

In my small nation without a state, Catalonia, located in the North East area of Spain, surrounded by the Pyrenees Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea and with a strong Catholic tradition, it is going to take a long time to carry out research on sexual harassment in sport. It is going to be hard to get access to the elite athletes without the full support of the administration, but the work needs to be done, the ice needs to be broken, and research in Catalonia regarding this issue needs to be launched. So, I throw the ball into the elite-sport administrators court, and here I am, in "no-man's-land," awaiting their signals.

While I am waiting for the green light to come, I have decided to make sense of all the literature review I am reading on sexual harassment from the athlete's perspective. I am aware that there is work on sexual harassment from

coaches' perspectives (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2009; Bringer et al., 2002; Leahy et al., 2004), but for the time being, delving into athletes' experiences and perceptions is the main approach. As a convinced narrative sports feminist sociology writer I took the plunge and I resolved to explore the limits of sexual harassment narratives in the literature research by writing two stories with this idea in mind using writing as an instrument for inquiry (Richardson, 2000).

I made the first decision to research sexual harassment and abuse in sport. I do not need anybody's permission to do this. I do not need explicit empirical evidence that sexual harassment happens in Catalonia (Denzin, 2011). With all the athletes' testimonies in the literature (Brackenridge, 1997, 2002; Fasting et al., 2007, 2002; Kirby et al., 2000) I clearly envisioned the situation of sexual harassment in a sport.

The plot of the two stories came to me when I was reading about the *grooming process* (Brackenridge, 2002, pp. 35-38). This process explains how cunningly some coaches prepare athletes to normalize harassment and, some times even, abuse. The literature confirms that the most vulnerable situation for the athlete and the most advantageous for the coach is when the athlete is in the *stage of imminent achievement*. This situation takes place just before getting picked for Olympic or National teams or as a new athlete in these teams.

The grooming process unfolds mainly by the coach requesting longer training sessions and having more physical contact in order for technical movements to be improved. The unchallenged logic here is that she cannot just be very good; the athlete needs to be the best to get a stable post in the team. So, for the coach it is not very difficult to convince an athlete of all the things she needs to achieve in order to be able to fully become part of the elite team, even though some of the things can look a bit awkward and uncomfortable for her. Encountering such an ethical dilemma made most of the female students in my class end up asking themselves: "Is it worth it?"

The "Cocktail" Metaphor: Blending the Fragmented Subject With the Process of Writing

Following Richardson's (2000) advice that metaphor is "the backbone of social science writing" (p. 926) because it pushes the writer over the thresholds of other possible ways of thinking, I decided to search for my metaphor. My metaphor will help readers understand the struggles I underwent in order to show, through an evocative, reflexive, embodied, partial, and partisan story (Pelias, 2011, p. 661), focusing on the complexities of students' selves while dealing with sexual harassment stories in sport.

Like a new, original, unique cocktail, the metaphor comes after shaking several constituents in the same

setting—a drink that is never finished, out of which one cannot easily identify the ingredients because once they are blended they cannot be detached even though each one of them has brought its particular properties to the new mixture. The paramount characteristic of cocktails, apart from the fact that some of them are really works of art for their colors and taste, is that in the process of using all the adequate amounts and kinds of constituents as soon as each of them gets into contact they lose their original essence to become part of a communal essence. It would never be the same again. Similar to how the taste of a new drink *changes* while the ice is *melting* or the molecules are *settling* at the bottom of the glass or when the liquid is *traveling* through the throat, the merger between poststructuralist premises on the female subject (Braidotti, 1991, 2003; Gannon & Davies, 2007) and writing as method of inquiry and act of realization (Pelias, 2011; Richardson, 1997, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) takes place.

The point of converging the approach of the subject from feminist poststructuralist stances and writing as a way of knowing is the quest for showing how story telling, among other formats of alternative literary writing, can play with language and debunk the representative, humanist, unified, rational, and linear subject (Gannon & Davies, 2007). Bearing this in mind, Richardson's (2000, 2005) main turning point is that writing itself is a licit method of researching on data, on contextual knowledge, rather than just an innocent and transparent medium to represent data. In addition, poststructuralist feminist theories challenge and analyze the links between language, subjectivity, and power (Weedon, 1987). One of the stances of poststructuralist feminist thinkers is to show that it is not only in the material world that women are oppressed but also that it is in the symbolic sphere where women need to break through in order to overcome oppression and inequalities (Braidotti, 1991). Therefore, outlining the processes through which language creates symbolic meanings and social realities, rather than just depiction of them, is paramount in order to understand the mechanisms of oppression.

In this vein, Braidotti (2003), drawing from Irigaray's work, claims to give visibility to "the non-unitary vision of the subject. A subject which is definitely not one, but rather multilayered, interactive and complex" (p. 43). This contributes to challenge the simplistic idea of positioning oneself against sexual harassment and abuse—which most of us are—is enough to rid ourselves of the problem. We (specially people working in sports settings) need to be able to problematize and reflect on our position in the sport system. Like it or not, we are all part of its manifestations. As much as sports is associated with winning medals and bringing people together, sexual harassment and abuse is also part and parcel of that reality.

Braidotti's (2003) emphasis on working and representing the "differences within the subject" (p. 43) embraces the

idea of moving away from the belief of the existence of a unitary and consistent subject who knows and always has the possibility to act accordingly. Here what is at stake is the need to understand the complex mechanisms of formation of a monolithic subject's knowledge (Foucault, 1980), which strongly limits the possible representations of "a complex and multi-layered embodied subject" (Braidotti, 2003, p. 45). As a result, as the story unfolds, Ona, the main character, undergoes different, and even some times opposite and contradictory, positions regarding sexual harassment and knowledge. Then, realization is brought to the forefront (Pelias, 2011). Pelias takes Richardson's idea of writing further as a method of inquiry and adds that writing also "might function as a realization" (p. 660). He claims that when the process is "writing into" instead of "writing up" a subject, "writers discover what they know through writing" (p. 660).

Therefore, the practice of writing a story about two students' reacting to two sexual harassment narratives in sport positions me in multiple discourses and also helps me to find ways in which writing and teaching are less hierarchical and univocal (Richardson, 2000). My self and students' selves are part of the same process. Neither of us can simply position ourselves against sexual harassment and abuse in sport without reflecting and problematizing the complexities of the intricate ways in which our selves and positions are interrelated. And more important is the need to reflect on how my and their beliefs, discourses, and actions can contribute to either perpetuate or alleviate sexual harassment in sport.

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Bio

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